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MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA

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MEDITATIONS

ON

CHRISTIAN DOGMA

BY THE

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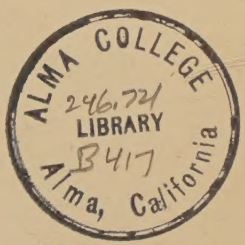

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METHOD OF MEDITATION.

METHOD OF MEDITATION.

Remote Preparation.

1. Read the meditation over-night.
2. Review it at intervals till next morning.
3. Affections of love and joy up to the meditation.

Introduction.

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Act of humility : acknowledge your unworthiness.
3. Confess your incapacity : ask for aid.

THE MEDITATION.

I. Adoration.

1. Contemplate the subject in God the Father, or in Jesus Christ : with reference to His (1) Dispositions, (2) Words, (3) Actions.
2. Offer Him, with respect to the subject, (1) Adoration, (2) Admiration, (3) Praise, (4) Love, (5) Joy, (6) Gratitude.

II. Reflex action on yourself.

Transfer to yourself what you have contemplated in God, considering :—

1. What example, or warning, or knowledge is to be gathered with a view to your own case ?
2. What are your past negligences, present deficiencies, future needs ?
3. What grace do you require from God ?

III. Practice.

1. Petition.
   (1) Simple petition.
   (2) With obsecration (through the merits of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, etc.).
   (3) With thanksgiving.
   (4) With intercession for others.

N.B.—Your petitions must be 1. Humble. 2. Confident. 3. Persevering.

2. Resolutions.
   (1) Let them be practical.
   (2) For immediate use.
   (3) Adapted to your special case.
   (4) Efficacious.

3. Colloquies.
   With God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, your Guardian Angel, etc.

Conclusion.

1. Thanksgiving.
   (1) For admission to God's presence.
   (2) For ability to pray.
   (3) For lights received.
2. Contrition.
   For faults in meditation, with a brief examination of the meditation.
3. Oblation.
   Offer the meditation to God by the hands of the Blessed Virgin for the supplying of all defects.
4. Spiritual Bouquet.
   Sum up the meditation in a maxim or ejaculation to be recalled during the day.

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MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE VII.

BEATITUDE.

1.—THE FINAL PURPOSE OF MAN.

I. Having considered God as acting within Himself and in His works, we come now to consider Him as the object of man's action, as the end of man, as his beatitude. Rational beings act with knowledge of what they do, and always have some object in view; this guides their actions, this they endeavour to attain. The sailor at sea always remembers the port for which his ship is chartered, and every single action of every day is directed to that end. The soldier in battle thinks only of the object of attack, and he makes everything, including life, subordinate thereto. The merchant buys and sells, always with careful calculation of his gains. Every one but a savage uses articles for their proper purpose, and follows carefully the directions for their use. Every one gives credit to the maker of a machine for knowing exactly its capabilities and the precautions that must be observed with it. Nothing is more important than to ascertain the final purpose of this world, the destiny of man in particular, the laws on which his successful action depends, the manner in which he ought to use the gifts bestowed on him. Yet, in this matter of supreme importance the majority of mankind act without the least forethought or even intelligence. Do not be so negligent. Keep the divine purpose ever before your eyes to guide every detail of your life. "O Lord, make me know my end, and what is the number of my days; that I may know what is wanting to me" (Ps. xxxviii. 5).

II. One great law of life is progress, aspiration to something better. No being is made to serve a purpose inferior to itself, but something higher. Consider what object is great enough to merit the service of man. He is the highest product of the material creation; everything in the world is inferior to him; all things are meant to serve him as the

instruments by which he works out his destiny here and hereafter. Man should not be the slave of the lower creation, a guardian of lands or beasts, an appliance for the accumulation of wealth. Nor is it his destiny to serve the purposes of other men, of angels even, or of his own material nature. His own talents, his position or good-name, his appetites and pleasures, knowledge and cultivation, even these are secondary means to an ulterior end; they must not be allowed to exhaust all his energies. No object less than the Infinite and Eternal is worthy of the service of an immortal soul, rational and free; no other can satisfy man's desires, absorb all his energies, complete his being. Serve God always, above all others, and alone. Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and in every detail your life will be well regulated and successful. If you swerve from this, however little, you will fail proportionately.

III. Three things obstruct us in looking towards God and seeking Him. 1. The absence or infirmity of faith. This is the root of much spiritual misery. Without the supernatural light of faith, we are in darkness as to all that is beyond the range of our senses and dull imagination, we cannot guide our steps aright, we are sure to stumble and fall. 2. Too great attachment to the goods of this transient life. As we expend more of our limited energies on such things, we shall have less to bestow on those which are more important and less obtrusive. The cares of this world are the weeds that strangle our higher aspirations. 3. The multitude of our sins and imperfections. Pride, uncharitableness, selfishness, frivolity, dull the sensibility of the soul, impair its appetite for truth and goodness, darken its judgment, make it blind, and deaf, and dumb towards God. Cultivate your soul in each of these respects. Let your faith be always vivid to enlighten you at every moment; maintain an intense appreciation and desire for spiritual things; consider every smallest imperfection as a cloud that will conceal God from you. Always seek His face.

2.—THE STAGES OF MAN'S DEVELOPMENT.

I. There are three successive stages that lead up to the fulness of human development. First, man is called by God out of nothingness, he receives existence and the due faculties of his nature. The merely natural stage of existence is the first benefit of God; it is the first deliverance wrought by the Word of God, raising man out of the deep abysses of non-being, and imprinting on him the first seal of likeness to the Divinity. As a matter of fact man did not remain in this state; he was not left on the same natural level with the rest of creation, but was raised to a condition that was above ordinary nature. His perversity, however, deprived him of the endowments of the higher state, and thrust him down to the natural level, wounded and depreciated by the uprooting of the tree of supernatural life which had been implanted in his soul. Still we may dwell with wonder and gratitude on the endowments which God has attached to this lower sphere of life, existence first, conscious intelligence, freedom of will, mastery over all lower nature, aptitude for progress and the continual achievements of knowledge, and for an organized social existence with all the mutual aids that it opens to us. Admire the generosity of God; consider the greatness of even natural man; but take care that pride in the lower gifts of God do not make you incapable of appreciating and aspiring to those which are higher.

II. The natural state is only the foundation on which a better life is to be reared, the life of supernatural grace and union with God. Admirable as man may be with his gifts of nature, he is still far below the state of perfection for

which God designed him even here on earth. This higher life was conveyed by God to our first parents immediately on their creation, and it was to have been conveyed to us as our due inheritance with the transmission of life. As our first parents deliberately renounced the power of begetting us to the supernatural life in addition to the natural, God has raised up to us in His Son a second father, who has begotten us to the supernatural life by means of Redemption applied to us in the Sacrament of the new birth. This second deliverance and elevation is much better than the first. Great as is the distance between natural man and a lifeless clod, far greater is the distance between man, the child of God, and man unregenerate. The grace of God is the most valuable of all your possessions; without this you could never attain to the glorious destiny now proposed to you. Guard this higher life, as infinitely more valuable than physical life and all the goods of nature.

III. But God has not done with man when He has raised him to the supernatural life with all its happiness and dignity. That state, as at present, is not without many imperfections; and God's goodness will not allow Him to put us off with an imperfect gift, however far it may exceed our needs and merits. We know God indeed, but as through a glass, in a dark manner. We possess supernatural life, but we may lose it by sin; and it would be imperfect, as being temporary, if it were limited to our stay in this world. God has opened to us, accordingly, a third stage of development, the life of glory, in which we shall enjoy immortality, the full sight of God, and immunity from every imperfection and drawback. Then the image and likeness of God will be perfected in us, and our faculties will be elevated, and widened, and satisfied in all their extensive demands. "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with face uncovered, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Strive to rise from grade to grade till you attain the fulness of human evolution.

3.—GOD THE END OF ALL THINGS.

I. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God" (Apoc. i. 8). All creation proceeds from an infinite source and aspires to return thither. Development or progress begins in the lowest stages, and rises irresistibly higher and higher, till completeness is attained at the summit of being. Hence it is written, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). Necessarily so: 1. Because God is the apex of all being to which all others must aspire. 2. Because it would be a false progress, a perversion of order, a degradation, for any action to terminate in an object lower than its own source, and for divine energy to find its end in a mere creature. God can operate only for the highest and noblest purpose, for the Infinite in Himself. God is especially the object of human energy, the goal of human development. The desires of human nature are insatiable, its aspirations unlimited; they will never stop short of that which is absolutely highest and best; they will never find their felicity except in the Infinite. It is a perversion of all right order and progress for man to look below himself, or to make any creature the object of his energies, or to expect full enjoyment in anything finite. In the end he will find nothing but failure; he will have exhausted his energies on that which is utterly unprofitable, and will have lost the only thing that can make him happy in eternity. Here as well as hereafter you will find no satisfaction but in God.

II. That God made all things for Himself is expressed otherwise by saying that He made all things for His glory. The good purposes to which anything may be directed are reducible to three, utility, pleasure, and glory; *i.e.*, honour or dignity or esteem. Every creature tends towards that

which is useful to its life; sentient beings further seek the gratifications of pleasure; intellectual creatures alone can appreciate that which conduces to their honour and glory. Men seek by their actions, first the necessaries of material existence, then the pleasures of life, physical and mental, and lastly positions of dignity by the exercise of their higher faculties and virtues. Now, God possesses all things in Himself. He is His own perfection and happiness. He needs nothing for His use, or to increase His pleasure or intrinsic glory. The utility and pleasure which result from God's external action accrue to us only and not to Him; the glory of them is not for us, He has reserved it to Himself. In the case of any good gift or any good action of ours we must say: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 1). Thus has God had regard to us in His works. He associates His own glory with our utility and happiness; and we likewise in glorifying and serving God are promoting our own best interests. What folly to expect any good from disloyalty to God!

III. The "glory of God" means, 1. His intrinsic essential glory, which is no other than His own perfection known and enjoyed by Himself. This is not dependent on creatures; it cannot be increased or diminished. 2. The sense of God's goodness and magnificence, with sentiments of adoration and gratitude, excited in creatures by the exhibition of His perfections and works. This is an accidental, extrinsic, and temporary glory; it is the due service of God's creatures to Him; this He demands of us; it is all that we can render to Him in return for all His bounty. The sum of this is increased by every one who serves God; it is diminished by every act of sin, by every soul that rebels and is lost. The great object of our lives should be to render this glory to God: 1. By recognizing and adoring His perfections as manifested to us; 2. by manifesting His perfections to others in our own lives, and so gaining them to the worship and love of God while advancing their eternal welfare.

4.—ALL CREATION SERVES GOD.

I. With the exception of fallen angels, lost souls, and those in mortal sin, all creation unites in one harmony of service towards God. The unintelligent creation below man serves God in three ways: 1. Because all things conform to the law of their being as imposed by God: "fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds which fulfil His word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8). They do what is required of them, and help in the gradual progress of the world towards God. Be as regular as they in rendering willing obedience to the law of your being. 2. Because all things represent something of the attributes of God. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. i. 20). Thus are manifested the immensity, the eternity, the power, the wisdom of God. Every action, word and thought of yours should in like manner be a manifestation of the beauty of holiness and the excellence of religion. 3. Because they all help to maintain the human race, afford food for body and mind, and conduce to that intellectual and free service which they cannot themselves render. So all the lower creatures are faithful in their own way. Do not pervert them from their service of God by making them an occasion of sin to yourself. Learn from these inferior beings that the law of your perfection, as of all the rest of nature, is fidelity to the great Creator.

II. Man, as the crown of creation, is more especially bound to honour and serve God, and in a higher way than the rest of creatures. We should do this by exercising our gifts in the different stages of our life. 1. We have our natural endowments and powers of mind and body, freedom, intelligence, imagination, speech, numerous other activities. One action of these faculties is of a higher kind and more worthy of God than the whole of the joint service of inanimate creatures. There is some way or other in which each

one of your faculties may promote God's glory. Search it out. 2. The supernatural endowments of grace, infused virtues, acts of religion, represent much more fully the divine attributes and the likeness of God. A single act of this kind surpasses all the excellence of the highest natural gifts. Faith, charity, humility, modesty, patience, are worth more than all the triumphs of science and industry. 3. The third degree of service we cannot now render to God, but we are preparing for it. Our perfected powers in heaven will be vastly greater than they are now; the service they then will render to God depends on our fidelity and service during this present life. Cultivate all your faculties now, by dedicating them to the advancement of God's glory, and preparing them for future use on a grander scale.

III. Above all other created beings, that one which subserves most perfectly the glory of God is the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. 1. That Humanity is united inseparably with a Divine Person, the Word of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is infinite in perfection, and is the only adequate image of the Father's glory. Every action, accordingly, of Our Blessed Lord is an infinite service rendered to God, and is of infinite value. 2. Jesus Christ, further, has become the cause of all the love, service and glory which mankind ever have paid or ever will pay to God. Without Him we were all weighed down by Adam's sin, incapable of rising to the supernatural order, or of performing by means of our natural faculties any service that could be rewarded supernaturally. He has given a value to our service by uniting it with His own. 3. In the realms of glory the Sacred Humanity again offers a transcendent homage to the Divinity, inasmuch as It enjoys a perception of the Divinity, and faculties for praise and love beyond all the capacity of angels and men together. Rejoice that God thus receives all that He merits, even infinite service, and that you have a share in offering it to Him.

5.—THE NATURE OF BEATITUDE.

I. By Beatitude is meant the supreme happiness of man, the satisfaction of all the needs of his nature, the perfecting of his being, the attainment of his highest aspirations, the accomplishment of the purpose of his existence. The one object which is capable of satisfying all these requirements is God. God is the Beatitude of man. Man's happiness, considered subjectively, is the consciousness of possessing God. In this state of completion there is no further wanting, no further striving; all that is attainable has been attained; nothing further remains; man enters upon perfect repose and peace. Yet Beatitude is not the repose of inactivity; it does not mean that human faculties have no further exercise; it is not the termination of active life; it is the perfection of our life, and life is essentially action. Further, we enter into a participation in the divine life; and God, while immutable, is pure activity. The action of our future life will differ widely as to its methods from our present activity. Instead of seeking what we do not as yet possess or perhaps can never attain, we shall find employment for all our energies on that which we shall then possess. We shall possess God substantially, we shall see Him face to face, yet we shall never comprehend Him thoroughly; and for all eternity we shall continually progress, drinking more deeply of the fountain of delights, and receiving ever new revelations of the divine perfections, truth, and goodness. So St. John, in describing the abode of our eternal rest, represents the Cherubim as resting not by day or night in their activity (Apoc. iv. 8). As Beatitude is action, so you must prepare for it here by continual activity, never resting in the service of God and man.

II. The faculties which apprehend God, and which by their activity will constitute the future felicity of man, are not those of his material and inferior part, the bodily senses and appetites; for these have merely a temporary function, the maintenance of bodily life in its present condition, while

the soul is working out its destiny through the body's instrumentality. The faculties chiefly exercised in Beatitude will be those which even now are recognised as the noblest and most powerful, those of the intellect, will, and affections. We shall perceive God, understand something of His perfections, acquire a knowledge of all His wonderful works in the realms of nature and grace, we shall trace out the course of His Providence, and read what are now to us the secrets of the universe. We shall further cleave to God as a necessary of life and as our life, with a boundless delight and peaceful satisfaction. Under these two classes of knowledge and love, we shall have countless new spiritual senses, or apprehensions of divine beauties now unknown to us, whose vibrations (so to speak) are too numerous and too fine to impress our present coarse faculties of mind and heart. You must now cultivate those senses which are to be hereafter the organs of your activity; acquire the habit of living in God's presence, seeing Him by faith, loving Him with all your heart.

III. This state of Beatitude and activity has for man a character of finality. Nothing further remains that is possible for him or even desirable or conceivable. Human nature is brought thereby to the state of highest completeness and perfection. Mind and body acquire a transcendent force, beauty, and activity. All that is good, all the treasures of God's bounty in the spiritual supernatural order will be at our disposal. We shall be brought into a wonderful union with the Infinite Life, the source of all excellence and joy. Even in this life the possession of God brings to His faithful ones some foretaste of those advantages. They possess the eternal life even now, and with it some of its appanages. They have peace and contentment, perceptions of supramundane things, certainty of knowledge, the delights of divine love; no other lot on earth is comparable to theirs. The delights of the natural life are no more satisfying than grass offered to a starving man, or a draught of syrup to the parched and thirsty traveller in a tropical desert.

6.—THE BEATIFIC VISION.

I. The intellect is the great faculty of spiritual beings such as the human soul, and it is the principal domain of human activity. Its powers are wondrously great, and it exercises itself in an endless variety of ways. Even within the limited sphere of this world, and with all the hindrances arising from our personal weakness and external impediments, human intelligence can find scope for a series of most wonderful achievements which will not be exhausted in thousands of generations. Nay more, as time goes on the field of investigation increases instead of diminishing. Granted a wider universe for research, and a hundred-fold multiplication of human powers, what imagination can picture the stores of knowledge that would be opened, or the heights to which the intelligence might rise? No interest is so absorbing, no pleasure so intense and so elevating as a rule, as those which spring from the exercise of the intellectual powers. The human mind is also a source of immense energy; it controls and turns to its purposes most of the great forces of nature; it has produced sublime works in the material sphere as well as in those of art, invention, investigation; further it is the image of that internal action of God by which the Son proceeds from the Father. The satisfaction of this high faculty is one of the great cravings of human nature; and its complete satisfaction by an infinite object must be the first element of supreme beatitude. What wonderful possibilities of delight are suggested by the mere thought of the multiplication of our present powers; infinitely greater must be the delight when God is the object of our enlarged intelligence!

II. The first element of the happiness of Eternity is the Beatific Vision. The first stage of intelligent action is to see and know the object that we are to deal with. Our heavenly life must begin with seeing God face to face, unveiled, as He really is. We shall see Him, not with the eye of the body, nor by the vibrations of cosmic light, but with

the spiritual eye, with the soul's intellectual perception elevated by a supernatural influx from God. As in ordinary vision the image of an object is impressed on the retina, so in the Beatific Vision the perfect image of God will be reflected on the soul, impressing on it a vivid representation of Him. "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord, with face uncovered, are transformed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18). In this way we shall enjoy an intellectual possession of God, very different from our possession of earthly things. This will be the basis of our happiness, for it must precede the action of love towards God, adhesion to Him, and full enjoyment of Him. "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure. For with Thee is the fountain of life and in Thy light they shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 9, 10). Keep your thoughts always turned towards the great object of your future knowledge and delight.

III. God is the supreme intelligence, and comprises in Himself all knowledge and all truth. The vision of God is also the vision of the subsidiary truths contained in the mind of God, and of all events past, present, and future perhaps; if we possess the knowledge of that which is greater we shall also know those things which are less. At present we cannot picture to ourselves more than the treasures of natural knowledge, and we aspire to these accordingly. This knowledge doubtless we shall possess in all its fulness; and, extensive though it is, it will be the mere beginning of a further knowledge that will absorb into itself and transcend all the science which now we value so highly. The supernatural knowledge which religion communicates to us now, and which we hold by the evidence of faith and not by the evidence of sense, is the foregleam of the knowledge which we shall see in the Beatific Vision. This knowledge alone will never become void when all else shall lose its interest for us; and by God's mercy this highest science is accessible to the simplest souls. Value it as better than all the natural attainments of the intellect.

7.—BEATIFIC LOVE.

I. There is a second element of the blessedness of heaven, which completes the happiness arising from the possession of God by the Beatific Vision; this is called Beatific Love. These two operations sum up and contain all the activity of the soul. They correspond to the double operation of the Divinity within Itself. By the action of Divine Intelligence God the Son proceeds from the Father; by the action of Divine Love the Holy Ghost proceeds from Father and Son. In dealing with us, the creative action of God is through His Word, and the action of His love is in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. The two principal operations of our souls correspond to those in God; with them we make Him the due return for His almighty action on us; they constitute our duty towards Him, and our own perfection and beatitude. We first see and know God by the intelligence, we recognize His excellent claim on us, and then by love we enter into further union with Him, give ourselves to Him, and take possession of Him in a new and better way. Thus our whole being merges in God, and all our faculties are devoted to His service. Love is made possible by the preliminary action of intelligence and free choice of God. Knowledge is sanctified, made effectual, and made living by love. You must begin the practice of beatific action while yet on earth. Be careful not to limit yourself to science, even to the sacred science of God. Mere knowledge is vain and unfruitful, and becomes material for sin. Let it be made practical by means of love.

II. Love is the perfection which God manifests above all others in His dealings with mankind. Love is the highest and last form of service which we can offer to God. Love includes everything else; "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). It destroys all obstacles to union with God. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv. 8). "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved

much" (Luke vii. 47). It is declared by the Apostle to be the greatest and the most lasting of the three theological virtues. As a natural emotion even, love holds the highest place. It is the most essential expression of vitality, and most necessary as an element of life. St. Paul speaks of the absence of affection as a mark of unnatural degradation (Rom. i. 31). All mankind crave for it, and they receive it gladly, even if it be only the love of a dumb animal. As a virtue it is most ennobling, and is the parent of many great virtues, generosity, patriotism, self-sacrifice. It is a virtue of singular beauty in every one of its forms, and it helps to build up the intensest earthly bliss. This action of the soul constitutes the last element of supreme beatitude. Our capacity for loving will be enlarged; we shall see an object infinite in goodness and loveliness, in its power of exciting love and affording the fullest satisfaction. Begin now to love God.

III. As soon as the just are admitted to the sight of God, they will become conscious of the infinite affection He bears to them, and they will be drawn to Him with the cravings of an all-absorbing affection. They will realize that He is indeed their life, a necessary of existence, for which every fibre of their being hungers and craves. They will seek Him with greater intensity than men have ever shown in struggling for food, for water, for air, for light, for liberty, for family, for wealth, for life. They will give themselves up in return to Him with absolute abandonment. This will bring about a further resemblance to God in the soul. There will be conformity of the human will to the divine, and of all sentiments and desires to those of God. Hence will arise the most perfect contentment, peace and blessedness. That Beatific Love will commence with God, will extend to the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Lord, then to the Mother of Jesus, to His Angels, Saints and all those who are loved by God. The kingdom of God on earth, as being the forerunner of heaven, must also be a kingdom of love embracing all from first to last. Strive to make it such.

8.—THE QUALITIES OF BEATITUDE.

I. The first of the qualities to be noted in the state of Beatitude is that it will be eternal; according to the word of Scripture: "He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more" (Apoc. iii. 12). Security is necessary for the highest happiness. There is no full possession or full enjoyment of that which may at some time or other be lost. As a possession is more valuable, so does the prospect of losing it cause more anxiety or even misery. In heaven we shall for the first time truly have "peace in our possessions." God will never withdraw the gift He has bestowed. No creature can intervene to deprive us of it, or to move us by terrors or flatteries to reject it. The soul, seeing God, can never recognize a superior attraction in that which is opposed to God and to Beatitude. It will never grow weary or find monotony in the immense variety of heavenly delights and the continual novelty of them during eternity. His "conversation hath no bitterness, nor His company any tediousness but joy and gladness" (Wisd. viii. 16). Human faculties will never wear out, or lose their vigour, or desire a change; the love and enjoyment of God will advance for ever with an energy that will never die. How miserable is all that the world can give compared with this! How small are the attainments of our natural abilities, how disappointing when grasped, how brief their tenure, how bitter the loss of them! What folly to devote a lifetime to the pursuit of such objects, and to neglect the supernatural which alone endures!

II. A second quality of Beatitude is that sin will be no more. Sin, beyond everything else, is the misery of our present existence. As long as we live we are not exempt from daily minor transgressions, and we are for ever in danger of a serious and disgraceful fall that may work our eternal destruction. We need always to walk in fear and trembling. In heaven this danger will be at an end; the

state of glory will be most truly "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that faileth not" (1 Pet. i. 4). The clear vision of God will be so absorbing that it will be impossible to alienate oneself from Him and seek His opposite; love will be so intense that it will never pass into hostility. We shall not be in any way curtailed of our full freedom; but that freedom will be delivered from the weakness and instability that now make it waver between good and evil. We shall be free from that ignorance of God and forgetfulness of Him which is so often a cause of sin. "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him nor known Him" (1 John iii. 6). Sin being removed, the only thing which could destroy our beatitude is removed; and nothing else can separate us from the love of Christ which will be our eternal happiness. What a relief it will be to you when you find yourself raised above the degradation of sin, the danger of offending God, the possibility of failure, and above all those miseries which in this world dog the steps of sin!

III. A third quality of the state of Beatitude is the glory and beauty with which the souls of the just will be invested. It will be an unending delight to the soul itself so glorified, and to all others who behold it. The light of God's countenance will irradiate the soul, His splendour will be reflected in it, and His image will be multiplied throughout the universe according to the numbers of the blessed. In this world all the works of God's hand are distinguished by their beauty. What an abundance of loveliness there is in every zone of the earth's surface, in every season, in every class of creatures! Far beyond all this, beyond all conception, will be the beauty and glory of the court that surrounds the throne, and of each separate soul. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; and with the robe of justice He hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels" (Isa. lxi. 10). This, you may hope, will be your case some day.

9.—THE ATTAINMENT OF BEATITUDE.

I. According to the decrees of Divine Providence, the perfection of human nature and the completeness of happiness are not to be attained during this life. The laws of God indeed are such that, if properly observed, they will secure us a high measure of happiness and prosperity here, though not in absolute fulness. But the sins of mankind have so disorganized the world and human society, that we have lost a great part of the temporal happiness which God designed for us. To mankind at large, and even to the just with all the aid and care that God bestows on them, this life is a series of pains, privations and struggles. Yet these may be turned to our profit. They elicit what is good in us, furnish occasions for virtue, train us for the future life, and make our final success more welcome and glorious. In these considerations we may find some alleviation for our troubles, some motives for bearing them patiently, while we look forward to a future deliverance. At length the end will come, and then, after such purgation as is necessary, we shall enter into the joy of the Lord. We shall not have to await the Resurrection and the Last Judgment, but within a short time, a time of months or days even, we shall have reached the goal of our existence. Nothing is more certain than this, granting your persevering fidelity. Let this thought be your comfort. Be contented with all that happens. Do not murmur at untoward events. Wait for the salvation of God.

II. Consider the means by which you are to attain to your final happiness and perfection in the state of Beatitude. 1. You cannot do so by means of your natural gifts and talents, nor by learning and cultivation, nor even by your natural religious knowledge, prayers or virtues, nor by any other efforts of your own. 2. Neither can any created object make you perfect and blessed; for the cravings of your heart go beyond all such things, and cannot be satisfied by them. Neither is your beatitude to be worked out for you

by parents, or priests, or friends, or by the Church itself, or by the intercession of the Saints. All these may be useful, but the supreme gift is from God alone. 3. But, when our prayers and good deeds are elevated by the influx of God's grace, they become available as means to our beatitude, and are even necessary to it. Such is the law of God's Providence. Our daily bread is from Him, but we must labour to secure it. Everything that is worth anything costs something, whether it be the prize for a race, mental or bodily advantage, or our heavenly crown. Every one has to labour in a different degree, and in ways that are peculiar to himself. Rely then on God, on yourself, on others. Neglect no aid to success; everything however trifling is of importance.

III. The degree of beatitude, glory, and possession and enjoyment of God differs for every one according to the divine decree and one's own works. "Star differeth from star in glory: so also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 41, 42). "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2). There will be special glory for those who have been leaders in the conflict against the three great enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh: *viz.*, the Apostles and other teachers of truth, the Martyrs, and the Virgins. All will receive infinitely more than they deserve or expect; all will receive in a sense the same reward, *i.e.* the possession of God; yet each will receive differently according to his capacity. While some receive more and some less, yet all will be content, for each will receive his fill as he is able to receive it. Thus there will be equality, and yet there will be due proportion in the amount of the reward accorded to each man in the state of beatitude. God gives to each man according to His will; some He has predestined to greater glory like the Blessed Virgin, some to less like the Penitent Thief. But within that limitation, it depends on you to increase your capacity for grace here and for glory and blessedness hereafter. This you may do to an indefinite extent. Make good use of present opportunities.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE VIII.

HUMAN ACTS.

1.—HUMAN ACTS IN GENERAL.

I. Having learnt of the destiny towards which we are moving, the next step is to study the means by which it is to be most surely attained. It becomes necessary for us to acquire the science of human actions, of the nature of our different impulses, of the sources of good and evil influences, and of the laws which regulate human action so as to make it most efficient for its purpose. We have to learn what are the elements that constitute a conscious and responsible human action in the natural and the supernatural spheres, what is the action of God and what the action of man in the general result, what are our dangers, what aids are offered to us, what is the nature and what the kinds of virtue and vice. This science is one of the most practical of all sciences, and bears most closely upon human development. Social life has its attendant sciences that aid its progress, sciences of health, of law, of crime, of education, of politics, of economics. Beyond all these it is important that men should know something of the science which deals with the law of God and the methods of our salvation, which makes our lives advance the glory of God, the highest evolution of our race, and our eternal happiness. Who shall teach us this? God Himself through religion and revelation, through our conscience and intercourse with Him in prayer. Beseech Him that His word may be "a lamp to your feet and a light to your paths" (Ps. cxviii. 105).

II. Some substances have no action but the physical movement impressed on them from without, like stones. Others have an internal motion of growth, like plants. Others have a power of external action which is spontaneous but not deliberate, like the animals; they are moved, without reflection or resistance, by impulses springing from their material elements and senses. The action of man is

superior to all this, it proceeds from full cognizance and deliberate choice; even when it originates in sense impulses, it passes under the control of intellect and will. There is no such thing as chance or compulsion in human actions; man is his own master, in this resembling his Maker, and he bears full responsibility for every thought, word and deed. The law that regulates human actions is then very different from that which guides inferior beings. Although human nature has something in common with plants and with the lower animals, although some of its functions are unconscious and indeliberate, yet wherever mind and will have control, a law comes into operation which is higher than the law in our members, and which must regulate their action according to the higher dictates of reason and revelation. Human action is a most intricate machinery of many parts which continually conflict with one another. The greatest care is needed in guiding it. A single irregularity or fracture may work a general ruin.

III. Consider what is required of us by reason and religion. We must train those powers of the soul whence human acts proceed, the intelligence, reasoning power, conscience, imagination, affections, will. We should store our minds with the knowledge of God, His truths, His laws. We should cultivate a delicate sense of right and wrong, and be rigid in doing that which is best. We should keep the memory and imagination free from ideas which may dull our finer sensibilities as to truth and virtue. We should keep under strict control those animal impulses which are necessary indeed for our material life, but which always run to excess when not ruled by reason. We have to guard against numerous forms of error, deception, selfishness, rashness, timidity, bad example, undue curiosity, impatience of necessary restraint. What a multitude of duties you have to do in the vineyard which God has committed to your care for these few years! You cannot accomplish them successfully without deep consideration and constant prayer.

2.—THE CONSTITUENTS OF HUMAN ACTIONS.

I. Human action, like the divine, proceeds from the two great faculties, the intelligence and the will. The intellect first takes cognizance of an object, and then guides the determination of the will to take action regarding it. Full knowledge is the preliminary to deliberation, responsibility, morality, and the eternal results of human actions. It is not itself the motive force, but it supplies the data for action by forming a judgment. If the mind's apprehension be immature or erroneous, then the action proceeding from the will is not fully voluntary in all its bearings, and responsibility is either diminished or ceases to exist. The intellect is a great gift of God and has a great function. "He filled them with the knowledge of understanding. He created in them the science of the spirit; He filled their heart with wisdom and showed them both good and evil" (Eccli. xvii. 5, 6). This great faculty is capable of being made more efficient by cultivation. It is further accommodated by God for its duties in the supernatural guidance of man, by means of the light of conscience as to good and evil in our actions, by the revelation which God has given us, and by a special influx of illuminating grace. Apply your reason to the truths that God has made known to you, and let its judgments be your guide. Never surrender yourself to the reckless impulses of bodily appetite or blind passion. Keep your guiding faculty clear from the mists of self-will, prejudice and ignorance, and ask the Lord to send forth upon it the rays of His light and His truth.

II. The intellect needs to be supplemented by the executive power of the will to constitute responsible action. Intelligence without free-will would be a mockery, a state of slavery and violence. Without intelligence free-will could not exist; action would degenerate into aimless floundering or a compulsory sequence. The seat of human power and mastery is in the will. This is a citadel, impregnable to all,

where man rules absolutely the actions of his mind, and to a great extent those of his body. The inward determination of the will is superior to all influences. No outward force of human law, of violent compulsion or restraint, can break or bend it; even hell cannot change it. God Himself will never force it. The intelligence may have knowledge forced upon it in spite of resistance, it may be convinced by reason and illuminated by force of grace; but even so, the will is able to resist this intimate influence. God appeals to the human will, commanding, attracting its choice, strengthening it for good; but man determines whether he will submit or rebel, love or hate. Many say with the old heathen: "I know the better and approve; I do the worse." They persuade themselves that the power of doing evil involves the right to do it. They foolishly revolt against God in order to assert their free-will. The most just and most noble exercise of your liberty consists in submitting to God.

III. The character of man's actions, his responsibility, and his reward depend, not on his intelligence or on his facilities for acting, but on his will. External causes may mislead the intelligence or change the aspect of an action; its real character depends on the intention and inward determination. "Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings xvi. 7). The rectitude of the will, if thoroughly sincere, compensates for all errors of the intelligence, for want of opportunities of doing good, for the frustration of good intentions. Our merit and our standing with God depend, not on those advantages which have come to us without our earning, or by the accident of birth, nationality, education, nor even upon the actual good results of our labours, but on the attitude of our will towards God. In some respects the man of desires may be better than the man of action. Study to form aright your will, which is the spring of all your works and all your merit. Adhere to God with all your heart and soul, seek always to do right, and you need not fear for the result.

3.—THE ACTION OF THE WILL.

I. We have to distinguish two kinds of operation of the will. The first is simply the resolve or determination. It is an immanent action, abiding within the faculty itself, and not proceeding to the execution of the resolve. The intellect judges that a certain object or course of proceeding is desirable; the will approves of this, adheres to it, and elicits an act of determination that precedes the actual steps taken by other faculties to carry out the resolve. After this has been carried into effect, there is a further immanent action of the will, that takes complacency or enjoyment in that which has been done or attained. This action of the will is always perfectly untrammelled; it is there that absolute human liberty has its throne. All demerit and offence against God arises from this inward determination of the will. Thence also merit and fidelity to God take their rise. Without this inward adhesion of the will to goodness there is no real service of God, and even acts of virtue become criminal hypocrisy and selfishness. If the will be fixed on God and the practice of goodness, its influence will sanctify the whole life, and it will lead infallibly in spite of all obstacles to the true service and love of God. "If thine eye be simple, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great will the darkness itself be?" (Matt. vi. 22-23). How important it is to regulate the will, to give it the habit of turning instinctively at the first moment in the direction of God, and away from selfishness and sin!

II. The will not only has its own interior action, but it is further the executive power which causes its decrees to be carried into effect by the other faculties; all of these belong to its domain, and their action is dependent on the

will. The act of the intelligence precedes the will and guides it; yet even this is at times controlled by the will. The free-will of man can turn the thoughts in certain directions, can dwell on the worse rather than the better reasons, on falsehood rather than on truth, can stifle the voice of conscience, and refuse to give effect to the sound conclusions of the judgment. The voice of passion and prejudice and self-interest and timidity is frequently raised against the decisions of reason and conscience; the freedom of man is not limited in regard to either; he is not overwhelmed by the force either of good or of evil; he grants the palm of victory to which side he will. The executive power is not always able to suppress the stings of conscience, or the convictions of the intellect, or the obstinate murmurings of the passions, or the insurgence of the imagination. These are movements of potential good or potential evil; they do not become actually good or bad, virtues or sins, until the will has assented to one or the other. Accustom your will to be guided by reason and religion, and to resist all lower impulses.

III. The highest action of the will is when it turns to God, adheres to Him, and is conformed to the divine will. The greatest homage we can render is to submit that faculty which is dominant in us and rules the whole being, to the superior claims of the Almighty. The greatest perfection of our will is when it is in harmony with the supreme and perfect will. Our fullest liberty will be found in humble dependence on the Lord of all things. Our will must always be efficient and triumphant when it desires only that which is accordant with the will of God. Let your will be always intent on God, always seeking Him, always conformed to Him. Let its mastery be established over all the other faculties, in order that it may dedicate them to the service of the supreme Master. Let your will express itself in vehement, continual acts of love of God and adhesion to Him, and the resolve never to be separated from Him.

4.—THE PASSIONS.

I. The Passions, in common language, are excessive and perverted impulses towards some particular object; so we speak of the passion of avarice, of gluttony, of lust, etc. Theologically speaking the Passions are the primary bodily emotions which lead us to seek advantages or shun evils which concern our animal and mundane nature. They belong to the divine economy, they are inseparable from our present state, they are good in themselves, and under due guidance, they are for our temporal and spiritual benefit. The Passions are such general impulses as desire, striving, courage, antipathy, avoidance, fear, enjoyment, without reference to any determinate object. These are said to belong to the "sensitive appetite," they are roused by external objects, they affect us through the senses and the brain, and then they excite corresponding movements in the mind and will. Their general purpose is the conservation of life, whether in the individual or in the species. These emotions are the same in character and operation among men as among the lower animals. The fury of the lion, the cruelty of the tiger, the timidity of the hare, the cunning of the fox, the pride of the peacock, are all useful for the conservation of life. Thus you have community not only of origin but of qualities with the beasts. Humble yourself therefore. Take care that these qualities do not lower you to the level of beasts, but utilize them so that they may aid you in attaining the level of the angels.

II. The object of the passions is primarily the life of the individual, and they are essentially self-seeking. Among the lower animals the passions are in the main hostile to other species, and even to other individuals of the same species; they are the instruments used in the struggle for existence. The law of inferior creation is "each for him-

self against all." The proportion and harmony and efficiency of the brute species require that multiplication be limited and that the weaker be exterminated. Destruction is as necessary for their good order as production. Man differs from the beasts in life and character, in ultimate destination, in the standard by which he is valued, and in the lines of his evolution. His law is, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; for he that shall lose his life for My sake shall save it" (Luke ix. 24). He is not to sacrifice others to his needs, but to sacrifice himself for others. The line of development in the brutes is reversed for man; its instrument is not destruction but love. Individualism must be restrained in the interests of all. Unless the natural animal impulses be checked by a spiritual law, human life always becomes an orgie of wrong, oppression, cruelty, lust and bloodshed. Control them in your own case.

III. 1. Man is too precious to be developed like the lower species by violent weeding out. He is intelligent, free, immortal, like God. Even the weak, poor, sinful, ignorant specimens have special claims on the love of God and of men. The physically unfit are often intellectually most fit. The morally unfit are capable of being perfected by grace, repentance, and purgatory. 2. Further, man is not isolated but social. The existence of society depends on every one aiding and being aided. Selfishness is fatal to general prosperity. Our Lord has offered to men a perfect form of society, where there is equality and yet subordination, liberty with due restraint, sufficiency for all, and the elements of incalculable progress and prosperity; and all this is based on the service of God and on justice and love between men. The life of animal impulse substitutes the individual for the society, hostility for mutual aid, extermination for amelioration, the law of the wild beast for the law of Christ. A regulating force is needed for the passions; only two forms are possible; instinct in the case of animals, the supernatural law of God in the case of man.

5.—THE EFFECTS OF THE PASSIONS.

I. In the lower animals the passions do not run to an irregular excess, because there is an automatic check upon them in the shape of irresistible instinct. If man were subject to the same conditions as the brutes, the passions would be to him an advantage pure and simple; so would they be if all our faculties were in the state of equilibrium established in Eden. The necessary compensating check must be applied by man's free-will guided by reason, conscience, and revelation. Failing this, the action of the unbridled passions is destructive: 1. Because of the prepotent influence which the critical action of Adam under probation exerts on his progeny. 2. Because man is not stationary like the animals but progressive; and his faculties demand a continual advance of gratification whether it be on good or evil lines. 3. Because the intellectual powers of man when wrongly applied, add an enormous energy to the force of the primary emotions. Thus it comes about that human passions possess an abnormal activity which is fatal to the social order of life, to the physical life of the species, and finally even to the individual who has sought his profit in them. "The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind" (Wisd. ix. 15). You have a source of immense danger within you. Do not suppose that because the passions are natural in origin they can be safely indulged.

II. Physiology no less than religion affirms that the unrestrained action of the animal emotions is prejudicial and that human nature is provided with the necessary apparatus for controlling them. Man has not been left, like the beasts, to the guidance of his sensible appetites. Man differs from the beasts, not simply in that he exercises the same physical functions in a conscious manner, but chiefly in his power

of regulating and restraining them. Man possesses a "mechanism of inhibition," a power of judging with the intellect and deciding by his free-will, in opposition to the physical impulsions of sense, nerve and brain. This power is intended by nature to be used, as much as the animal impulses which it controls. Self-indulgence reduces this vital balancing power to a state of atrophy; it becomes inoperative, the passions insist on a growing excess of gratification, the mind and will go to ruin, moral insanity supervenes, the man becomes a creature of egotism and unthinking impulse, and the work is finished by mania, early death or suicide. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 5). Christian austerity is no fanaticism; it is necessary for moral health, for domestic happiness, for physical vitality, as well as for the maintenance of the supernatural life.

III. The animal emotions are an ever-present anti-social force warring against the higher social instinct of men. Civil government is little more than a machinery for repressing their irregularities in order to maintain the life of the community. But even the instinct of self-preservation acting through the natural economy of society falls short of its scope. Civil law does not go to the root by forming the moral character; it only deals with the superficial results of ineradicable evils; it punishes only a few of the crudest and primitive forms of wrong-doing. Thus force rather than principle has become the basis of social order; and force, when once so consecrated, often becomes an engine of enslavement and obstruction. The very forms of liberty and justice are perverted to the crushing of the weak, the perpetuation of misery, the breaking up of social order. Practise the Christian law and self-restraint as a social duty as well as a religious one. The natural man makes life a deadly struggle for bare existence. The brute force of law and the influence of Christian men and women are the only barriers against destruction.

6.—THE MORTIFICATION OF THE PASSIONS.

I. In consequence of the insurgence of the lower elements of human nature and the weakening of the controlling powers, one of the first necessities of natural life, social life, and spiritual life, is that the animal proclivities in man should be held in check. One of the chief functions of education both mundane and religious is to supply such a control; for, without it, there is no providing for the future, no progress, no harmonious common life. We need to be carefully disciplined in order to learn how to renounce a present enjoyment for the sake of a larger one in the future, a lower one for a higher, a material for a spiritual and eternal one. Again, the existence of a community demands the restraint of individual vagaries; there is no liberty or enjoyment of rights without some restraint on the liberties of others, and the enforcement of duties. Discipline and self-control and strict obedience to a guiding authority are essential conditions for all combined action, whether in warfare, in industry and commerce, or in religion; else there is nothing but intestine conflict, the neutralizing of energies, and chaos instead of ordered progress. "If you bite and devour one another, take heed you be not consumed one of another" (Gal. v. 15). You need always to keep your passions well in hand like a restive horse. Never relax the tension lest they overcome your power. If your will should lose the habit of mastery over the passions they will hurry you headlong to destruction.

II. Holy Scripture shows us frequently the need of mortifying our selfish natural impulses. It is ever the case that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary to one another, so that you do not the things that you would" (Gal. v. 17). We must therefore resist the encroachments of the spirit of self. Our Lord, though His impulses were perfect, gives us an example: "I came not to do My own will but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). The Apostle also:

"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things. . . . I chastise my body and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps . . . I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 25, 27). Therefore the command is laid strictly on all Christians: "Refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul" (1 Pet. ii. 11). "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v. 24). This must be your regular practice. It takes long to learn. You will not be able to restrain your passions in the moment of sudden stress, unless you have gained by daily exercise, in matters of smaller moment, the power of reining in every impulse and retaining the fullest self-possession.

III. On what basis is it possible to ground a system of life which is so repugnant to man's primary impulses as self-restraint, the preference of other's interests to his own, the renunciation of pleasure and gain, the sacrifice of self? These practices are beyond mere nature, they must be based on the supernatural. Virtue and self-control cannot be enforced by law; and if this were possible, it would be more accordant with human dignity that the restraint should come from within, by the exercise of one's own liberty, than from an external force restricting liberty. Such is the character of the restraints imposed by the Christian law of mortification. Secular cultivation gives a wide knowledge, and sharpens all the faculties; but its effect on the passions is rather to make them more exacting and more efficient, to refine their grossness without mitigating their cruelty, and to open out ways of offending God and exploiting other men on a larger scale than has been contemplated by criminal law. Learn the lesson of mortification and austerity, not because of its utility to yourself personally, not out of regard to public opinion, nor for fear of consequences, but because of the spiritual perfection to which you are bound to aspire, because of God's holiness and the example of Jesus Christ.

7.—REMEDIES FOR THE PASSIONS. 1.

I. We are concerned, as to our natural life, with two classes of things, good and evil, aids and hindrances. The passions, or the emotions of our endowment, are designed to deal with these. The first division of them embraces the emotions of desire, ardour, hope, striving, love, audacity, enjoyment, which regard such things as are beneficial to our life. These passions are good things in themselves, as conducing to the continuance of divine operation in this world, by aiding us to gain such necessaries as health, food, rest, recreation, posterity, accumulation for future needs, activity, knowledge, etc. These things afford a double exercise for our faculties; first they provide for the satisfaction of our legitimate desires; secondly, they furnish the occasion of establishing the mastery of the spirit over sense-impulses, and opportunities for struggle and reward. Our Lord shows us this double use. At one time He sat down to the banquets of the rich; again he made His repasts examples of frugality, and yet again He practised mortification by refusing food at unfitting times. For the most part, however, He deprived Himself of the delights of sense, and showed that moderation and even privation are better than abundance and indulgence. The activity of His desires was transferred to the spiritual food of doing His Father's will. In like manner transform the natural energies and desires of your character into supernatural qualities, by mortifying them or directing them to spiritual objects.

II. The conditions of our fallen state turn these natural emotions into a source of temptation and danger. The animal and the spiritual in us are no longer in a state of equilibrium; the lower attempts to dominate over the higher, and secures the larger share of our attention and energy, when the division has to be made between them. We have lost both the natural and the preternatural power which kept the natural impulses in due subordination and limited them to their proper objects. Since Adam's preference of the

mundane level of existence instead of the spiritual, we suffer from the predominance of the carnal element in us, and we can no longer trust to the dictation of sense-impulses as to our spiritual or even as to our bodily advantage. We are attracted too much by tangible worldly things, and pursue them too eagerly. The good impulses of nature are rapidly perverted into the triple concupiscence of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life. "Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death" (Jas. i. 15). Watch carefully all your impulses, however good they be, lest they turn towards some unworthy object, or seek a good one with merely natural and unmeritorious energy.

III. It is necessary to establish order in the lower sphere of our being by means of principles drawn from the higher life. Under this condition, nothing of our natural endowments is an evil. The very qualities whose perversion constitutes our predominant fault may become the material of a predominant virtue. As nature turns the gifts of God to evil purposes, so may supernatural grace turn our weaknesses and passions to our spiritual profit. Make everything subordinate to the will of God. Moderate the vivacity of your desires and efforts towards every object, and seek all good things for the greater glory of God and your own salvation. Never let your own interest or enjoyment be the motive of your actions; accept such things however as the natural consequences of good actions, and as permitted by God; but detach your mind from them, and be ready to resign to Him, if necessary, all the glory and advantage accruing from your works. Chiefly, however, exercise the desires and energies of your soul in seeking for spiritual things and promoting the work of God on earth. The natural emotions will have a good or bad effect according to your use of them. "God hath given to a man who is good in His sight wisdom and knowledge and joy: but to the sinner He hath given vexation and superfluous care" (Eccle. ii. 26).

8.—REMEDIES FOR THE PASSIONS. 2.

I. During this life good is always mingled with evil. "Mourning taketh hold of the end of joy" (Prov. xiv. 13). The dangers that beset our natural life are numerous, serious, unavoidable. "I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and affliction of spirit" (Eccle. i. 14). In order to warn us against natural evils and give us power to resist them, God has implanted emotions or passions in man of aversion, discontent, fear, horror, hatred, resistance, in the same way as the corresponding instincts in animals. All these have a good purpose of their own. Our work of progress in this world demands that we fight against and reduce the multitude of evils as we can; and we are provided with natural impulses accordingly. These are either to be followed in part or resisted in part, according to the nature of the evils in question, and the recommendations of reason enlightened by grace. The useful effects of natural evils on us, and the different modes of encountering them, are exemplified in the life of Our Lord. Though God, He was not imperturbable or unaffected by evils. He was sensible to emotions of fear, sympathy, disappointment, and even anger and indignation. He either resisted evil, or avoided it, or endured it painfully, as occasion demanded. His sensibility to it led Him to relieve the miseries of the afflicted, or to fight courageously against wrong, or to exhibit patience and the penitential spirit in submitting to it. The Stoic insensibility to evils was no virtue; natural emotions are not to be extinguished but regulated; the evils of life are useful as eliciting either our energy in resisting or our patience in enduring.

II. The natural emotions which regard evils may easily mislead instead of guiding us. We may err by enduring evils instead of resisting them, or by carrying our resistance too far. We have to take care lest patience degenerate into apathy, discouragement, and sloth on the one hand; on the other, we must moderate our righteous indignation

according to reason, lest we transgress the laws of prudence, and remedy a lesser evil by a greater, or a physical by a moral one, or lest we crush the broken reed and extinguish the smoking flax. We may also err by wasting our strength in struggling against the inevitable and resisting the manifest will of God. It is difficult to know the true nature of the ordinary evils of life and the proper method of encountering them. One thing is certain, that we shall do more harm than good if we trust to our merely natural impulses in detecting and remedying evil. It is a mistake to suppose that every form of conflict against evil is good in itself. Under the influence of the natural spirit we are likely only to add evil to evil. The natural emotions need to be supplemented by the wisdom, and courage, and patience, and joy, that proceed from the Holy Ghost.

III. Certain considerations will help us to regulate our natural emotions in order that they may deal properly with the evils of life. 1. God elects, for our spiritual training, to send us trials as well as pleasures; therefore "if we have received good things at the hands of God, why should we not receive evil?" (Job ii. 10). 2. All evils are in a sense from God, as being in accordance with the natural law, and intended to promote its observance by warning us through the penalties to avoid transgressing it. 3. Every temporal evil may be turned to our present and future advantage: "To them that love God all things work together unto good" (Rom. viii. 28). 4. We must not court trouble in anticipation. The reality is seldom so bad as the expectation. Further, God grants compensations and alleviations, or opens an unexpected path of deliverance. He "will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). 5. There is always strength to combat, or comfort to endure, in God. "My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God and was delighted" (Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4).

9.—THE MORALITY OF ACTIONS.

I. Human actions, besides being intelligent and free, have in virtue of these qualities a further one. They have a moral character, *i.e.* a relation to a transcendent moral law; and they are good or bad accordingly. The mere fact that it pleases us to do a thing, that it proceeds from our intelligence and free will, does not make it morally good. Neither does the command of the civil law, or the common custom of mankind, or the immediate utility of an act, or its pleasantness, or the fact of our being under a certain compulsion, make our actions good. They are good if they forward the chief purpose of man's existence, and bad if they are adverse to it. That purpose is the conformity of our lives to the ideal of human perfection as it is in the mind of God; and this ideal is made known to us by our reason, our conscience, and the revelation of God in His word and in Jesus Christ. God Himself is the rule of human morality. There are three factors in our actions which determine their conformity to their supreme standard; *viz.*, their natural object and tendency, man's intention in performing them, and their accompanying circumstances. Some acts are good in all these respects; others are deficient in one or the other point, and are bad accordingly. Let your actions be perfect in all respects, and conformed to justice towards God and man. Let them not be guided by any considerations of selfish utility or human respect, but only by high principle of duty towards God and to your Christian character.

II. There is a natural moral goodness of human actions, or conformity to the ideal in God as author of the natural order. Such acts have their proper effect on their agent, which is a reward within the limits of the natural order. But further, those who adhere to God by belief and love have a great privilege open to them. The infusion of sanctifying grace makes them like to God as Author of the supernatural order, and causes their actions to reproduce

the divine perfections in a higher manner than in the mundane sphere. All men, even though unbelievers and sinners, have it in their power to perform actions of high excellence on the natural level. As the effect cannot transcend the cause, these actions, however brilliant, can never merit a reward on the supernatural level. A similar act may be done by a man in the state of grace; outwardly there will be no visible superiority in it; in reality there will be a difference as between heaven and earth. In the Apostle's words there are two sets of men, the carnal and the spiritual, who are absolutely separated from one another by an invisible line; their actions proceed respectively from nature and from grace. The two stand related in the same way as protoplasm, the basis of all organic life, and the imitation that is produced in the laboratory. They are identical in appearance and in composition; but there is something which man cannot detect, some operation of creative power, which endows the protoplasm with the enormous energy of life, while the human production is an inert mixture of chemicals. Such is the wonderful power of grace and religion in you unless you impede its operation.

III. Many human actions do not bear directly on our spiritual life and progress, although good as being the products of natural activities. They are indifferent, and have no definite moral character in themselves. But even these may receive the stamp of the supernatural, so as to become a spiritual service of God meritorious of an eternal spiritual reward. So St. Paul instructs us. "All whatsoever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17). "Therefore whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). If you live constantly in the presence of God, habitually desiring to serve Him, your good will becomes a sort of philosopher's stone which changes into purest gold the straws and wood and stubble that make up the rubbish heap of your daily life. Do not waste such precious opportunities.

10.—INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ACTIVITY.

I. Man has a double activity, that of the mind and soul within him, that of the bodily acts proceeding from the inner principle. The conscious, deliberate, internal activity is peculiar to him as man, and distinguishes him from the beasts, and gives his outward deeds their moral quality as good or bad. If by accident the inner principle is inactive, as in infants, or somnambulists, or lunatics, the overt action is not regarded as a human act, or as responsible before divine and civil law. When mind and will are active, they determine the character and the value of the external operation. The true human life is within us: there the battle is chiefly fought out between good and evil; there firstly is the Kingdom of God to be established (Luke xvii. 21). That which is visible is not the constituent of moral goodness, but that which is invisible. Therefore all judgment is reserved to God, and we must never pass sentence on our brethren; "for man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings xvi. 7). Things which to the eye are most admirable may be in reality deeds of ostentation and hypocrisy; on the other hand, that which is lowly and unassuming may be an act of most exalted virtue. So the simplest action of Our Blessed Lord was worth infinitely more than the natural and supernatural virtues of all men and angels, by reason of the divine principle whence it proceeded. So the widow's mite was more than the offerings of the rich. So the humble life of Mary and Joseph in attendance on the Son of God was more than the lives of all Apostles and Martyrs, of all kings and sages and conquerors. So your merit and glory before God are not to be measured by opportunity or visible result, but by the dispositions and desires of your heart.

II. The action of mind and will not only gives a character to external works, but may be even a substitute for them. It is supernaturally true as well as naturally that the will is as good as the deed: or as the Apostle phrases it: "If the will be forward, it is accepted according to that which it

hath, not according to that which it hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). The readiness of Abraham to obey God's command is described in Scripture as being virtually the sacrifice of his son (Gen. xxii. 16). So too it is with our desire for God's glory and readiness for self-sacrifice. St. Augustine says: "Whatsoever thou dost wish and canst not do, God takes as done." See how important is the inner life. It is a world independent of the outer one, where virtue and the service of God may be carried to any extent without impediment. Its range is far greater, its actions far more numerous than in our external life. How generous is God to measure your merits and reward not according to the pettiness of your abilities, but by the fervour of your desires! Cultivate first and chiefly that life which God alone sees rather than that which is seen by men.

III. Yet external action is of great importance. Do not excuse yourself from it, thinking that holy feelings are sufficient. 1. Action is the test of good desires; if these are real they will express themselves in actualities. 2. Action fixes and multiples the desires of the will and adds the merit of struggle against difficulties. So actual endurance of martyrdom adds something more than the desire contains. 3. Action is necessary if you would "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). 4. Action is generally necessary where possible; so that the neglect of it makes the mere wishfulness an empty mockery and a rebellion against grace. In such a case it is said, "Desires kill the slothful; for his hands have refused to work at all" (Prov. xxi. 25). No good-will can supply for the neglect of actual reception of the Sacraments or open profession of one's faith. "And if a brother or sister be naked and want daily food: and one of you say to them, Go in peace, be you warmed and filled, yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit" (Jas. ii. 15, 16) to the giver or the receiver of the good wishes? Give effect at once to every good desire. Let your outer and inner life be harmonious and consistent.

11.—THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE.

I. God is the rule of perfect human life. Our goodness is conformity to God in inward and outward action. The principles that will guide us aright towards God are made known to us by the external aid of God's laws and the internal light which flows from Him upon the faculties of our soul. We have a misleading influence within us in the form of our animal emotions and inordinate passions. This is to be counterbalanced by the influence of our supersensible endowments. The intellect guides us in the apprehension of God as truth; the affections in the apprehension of Him as good; and these are supplemented by the conscience, which is a perception of the moral rectitude in God that should be reproduced in our actions. Conscience is an illumination superadded to the intellect for the guidance of the will; its object is all justice. This light is communicated to all mankind in a more or less perfect degree. In every action, the man who reflects is conscious of its relation not only to utility, or to pleasure and pain, but to honour or shamefulness, to moral goodness or evil. Unless we deliberately close our eyes, this sentiment will enlighten us before action; and afterwards, if we have done well, "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. i. 12); and if ill, it will sting us with remorse. Thank God for this gift, which is a further participation with Him, a manifestation of Himself to you under the form of sanctity, as well as truth and goodness. Endeavour to apprehend Him fully and reflect Him perfectly in a pure and upright conscience.

II. Conscience is in the last resort our direct and supreme guide. It is the application to ourselves of the divine law either as written in our souls or made known by revelation or civil authority. It takes the general principles of morality, and makes an individual application to each of our actions. Accordingly, the authority of conscience over us is final, and we must obey it exactly.

Whatever it says, that is the voice of God to us. If we disobey its distinct commands, we are in all cases guilty of sin; if we obey, we may not indeed always be right, but we are justified even in an erroneous action, and we are free from blame before God. Thus it is that, although it is impossible for any man to be always right and to avoid every error, yet no man is under the necessity of committing sin. God has given you in conscience not only a guide to what is right, but a preservative against guilt in case of error, and a defence against blame. Be always true to your conscience. Carry out its behests exactly and fully. Never think to escape responsibility by following the laxer teachings of another's conscience instead of your own.

III. It is not to be supposed, however, that the first spontaneous impulse or whim which springs up is the voice of God speaking through the conscience; and still less that it speaks infallibly from the first. As the intellect needs a long and careful training before it is apt for its special function of discerning truth; as even then it must take precautions against error, and must often invoke the aid of other minds; so the conscience cannot stand alone and speak, unaided and perfect; it must be formed on true principles, it must be trained in delicacy and accuracy, it must be guided by such moral doctrines as God has revealed to men. The fall of Adam has affected the conscience; the influence of the passions tends to blind it, and set it aside, and substitute the demands of sensual nature for the requirements of God. Human perversity often strives to justify itself by dignifying its whims, its prejudices, its obstinacy to grace, as dictates of conscience and by insisting on the duty of complete acquiesence, in them. Hence while you follow your conscience as a divinely given guide, you can never cease to work out your salvation in fear and trembling. Even that angel of light may be displaced by its counterfeit. Mistrust yourself always, and ask God to guide you.

12.—THE DEFICIENCIES OF CONSCIENCE.

I. In consequence of the Fall, Conscience is by no means perfect; it is liable to the influences of ignorance, prejudice, malice, and to those of heredity and surroundings; it has not the universality and rigidity of instinct in animals; it is often wanting in accuracy, in certainty, sometimes it fails entirely in its functions. Under the most favourable circumstances conscience sometimes fails to give a clear definite answer on an intricate question. We may find duties conflicting with one another. We may doubt about the law, its application, its modifications. Our course may be embarrassing, we may doubt which side is right, or suspect there is sin on both. Conscience is not useless even then. We must not indeed act upon its uncertain verdict, and run the risk of committing sin. True, it fails to enlighten us, but it has fulfilled its function in making us doubtful, and so impressing on us the duty of seeking counsel from God and men. Like the star which led the Magi, it sometimes sheds its light upon us directly and again partially fails us, so that we may use the other aids which God provides, and learn to mistrust our own faculties. The very uncertainty of conscience secures us a further degree of certainty from the other organs of God's speech to us. Beware of being too reliant on what you consider to be the supreme verdict of your conscience. It is difficult to discern the voice of human desire from the voice of God. Mistrust the influence of self, and be not too arrogant to seek advice from others.

II. It is possible for Conscience to be thoroughly misled and erroneous. If this proceed from ignorance that is involuntary and invincible, there is no sin; we shall be judged according to such light as we actually had, and not according to the strict law of God: "These having not the law are a law to themselves" (Rom. ii. 14). Many are sincere in the most flagrant errors; as they prove by the generosity

with which they subsequently receive the fuller revelation of truth. But the domain of conscience is peculiarly liable to the intrusion of conscious and half-conscious fraud. Conscience is a convenient excuse for any aberrations, before oneself or other men, and the insincerity passes undetected — except by God. A false conscience is often due to neglect of inquiry, to the stifling of the true voice of conscience until it becomes inaudible, to fear of facing the truth lest it should compel to some unwelcome duty or visit disobedience with remorse. It is most easy to corrupt the integrity of conscience, most difficult to restore it. In either case a permanent habit is formed. Habits become inveterate; and in the case of such a corruption of conscience, the interior leverage by which the truth of God should move the soul, is made of no avail; the material on which grace works loses its substance. Be always absolutely sincere with men, with yourself, with God.

III. Conscience may be practically destroyed by long obstinacy in sin, and by resisting the recognized voice of conscience and the Holy Ghost. Men can persuade themselves of almost anything. From deceiving others they arrive at deceiving themselves, and extinguishing the natural light that is in them. They disguise abominable principles under vague formulas; they declare that the higher law is an unnatural tyranny, that the passions are the real and only law of life; they call good by the name of evil, and evil by the name of good; they stifle conviction, and pass off mere obstinacy for sincerity. Finally the moral sense becomes extinct; the very light which is in them becomes darkness; self-deception is complete, and they go down blind and unsuspecting to the abyss. It is possible for any one to allow himself so to be tempted by Satan as to come to this extreme. It is a most terrible evil to themselves and to the world when any men arrive at this destruction of conscience. Pray God that this light of His countenance may never be dimmed or extinguished in you.

13.—THE INFIRMITIES OF CONSCIENCE.

I. The conscience is subject to two special infirmities which warp its judgment, and mislead us in action, and may be productive of great evils. One of these is scrupulousness. The word scruple connotes a petty and continual annoyance. A scruple is an exaggeration of conscientiousness; not that this can go too far; but it is the conscientious temper acting on a false judgment and an insufficient grasp of truth. It is the habit of timidity which thinks there is sin where there is no sin. It gives rise to hesitation before action and unprofitable self-searchings after it. It may proceed from a fervour which has not yet arrived at ripeness of experience, or from a secret pride, or from imprudence in following views that are accounted safer because they are more narrow and more rigorous. Scruples may be a result of our personal character, or may be permitted by God as a temptation to be resisted, or as a trial for our humiliation. They may injure us by causing discouragement and weariness of religious living; but judiciously treated they will conduce to our advantage. Remember that there is no sin except by a conscious act of the will, that God does not lay traps for you or rejoice in your destruction, that He does not expect absolute perfection from you in this life, that He is generous beyond possible conception in making allowance for your natural infirmities, and that the more miserable you are, the more His tenderness abounds. Thank your Lord for all this, and cast yourself upon Him with complete abandonment.

II. An infirmity of an opposite kind is laxity of conscience; and this is a much more perilous disease than scrupulosity. It makes light of that which is serious, it sees no sin where sin really is, it rushes with a light heart into danger, it scorns precise obedience and delicacy of conscience. It fails to understand the rigorous sanctity of God, imagining His ideas to be like to man's, and interpreting His long-suffering

towards the sinner as indifference towards the sin. Such a habit of mind is unholy and dangerous; it is directly provocative of sin, and it afterwards prevents the sinner from seeing the depth to which he has fallen. Akin to this is the Pharisaical conscience which strains at gnats and swallows camels wholesale; and which also is unconscious of the gravest personal faults, and rigidly virtuous regarding such deficiencies in others as it does not sympathize with. "How sayest thou to thy brother, Let me cast the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye?" (Matt. vii. 4). A lax conscience tends to widen ever further the limits of its transgressions and negligences, to lose more and more of the due veneration and awe of God, to become hardened, and to pass into that tepidity which makes the Lord vomit the offender from His mouth. This state arises from confirmed habits of sin, from stifling the voice of conscience, from luxurious living, from over-familiarity with the sinful and worldly minded. Be fervent, be punctilious in God's service, and esteem the smallest thing as a matter of high importance.

III. The rectitude and efficiency of our conscience depend largely on the care and cultivation we bestow on it. We must watch that it do not go to extremes and lose one good quality while we are thinking about another. It should be strict and yet possessed of Christian liberty, broad but never careless, delicate but not petty and pusillanimous, loving God above all things yet fearing with an honourable fear. It should be quick to detect the beginnings of sin, yet not alarmed at shadows; vigorous and prompt in doing good and opposing evil, yet never hasty and imprudent. After sin, conscience should inspire a hearty repentance and distrust of self, but never discouragement and loss of confidence in God. Such a conscience is a source of peace and happiness, it is wise beyond all the wisdom of this world, its testimony is more glorious than all the eulogies of men. Try to cultivate it.

14.—MOTIVES OF ACTION.

I. Our actions derive a great deal of their character and merit from the motive or intention with which they are performed. The lowest of supernatural motives in the service of God is the fear of hell. It is a servile motive, it looks to self, it does not savour of spiritual intelligence or of the generosity which God deserves from us; yet it is not a bad or even an unworthy motive. If indeed this fear were the same as natural fear in slavish minds, if it led to service under compulsion, to service which would not be exhibited except for the mere dread of punishment without any thought of God, then our fear would be absolutely servile and worthless. But hell, properly considered, is chiefly the loss of God; and the fear of hell involves a desire for the possession of God as the essential perfection of our nature and the sum of all good to us; it is a fear of the evils involved in the loss of God. This is not a bad motive, for it is put before us in Holy Scripture. The wise man tells us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. i. 7); and Jesus Himself says: "Fear Him that can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. x. 28). The thought of the terrors of eternal punishment is certainly one of great power in helping the well-disposed to withstand temptation. Any motive which has that effect has done much good; it may be an inferior one, yet our nature is not so lofty and generous that it can afford to dispense with even lowly motives as an assistance to a fervent life. Think often of the terrors of judgment; learn thence the odiousness of sin, and serve God better. Take care, however, that this be not your sole or chief motive. The lower one by no means excludes the higher.

II. Another motive for serving God is the desire of His rewards. This is higher, but is not yet the highest. We shall do well to cultivate it with the others as it is enforced upon us in Holy Writ. Job compares himself to "the hireling" who "looketh for the end of his work" (Job vii. 2).

David in all his fervour says, "I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, on account of the reward" (Ps. cxviii. 112). And Our Lord encourages us to do good with the thought that we shall not lose our reward. Here again there is an essential difference between the motive of a temporal reward in serving man, and the motive of a supernatural reward in serving God. The man who is served and the reward he gives are two different things; the love of the latter is not the love of the former. But in the case of God, the reward and the person served are one and the same. "I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1). To desire the reward or to desire heaven is desiring God; but it is a less perfect desire, inasmuch as it is desiring Him with reference to self. Employ this motive also. It will strengthen you in the struggle for virtuous life; it will help you to rise to still higher motives, and, if you do fail in these, it will supply their place.

III. The highest motive, and the one to which we must aspire through the others, is to serve God for Himself alone as the Master of all, and to accomplish His will as being supreme perfection, abstracting from all thoughts of the world or self. This noble disinterestedness and philosophical frame of mind are difficult however to acquire. The love and desire of God associated with this motive are rather of an intellectual than of an emotional character. It is easier to love God on the lower consideration of what He is and what He does for us. Whichever motive you start with on the supernatural life, let it lead you to the love of God either in its imperfect or its perfect form, either for your own sake or for His sake. Do not remain on the lowest level, for "you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). Let the thought of hell keep you from sin, the thought of heaven move you to acts of virtue, and the thought of God make you love Him for Himself.

15.—THE NATURE OF SIN.

I. It is important to know exactly the nature of sin and in what its malice consists, on account of the numerous doctrines that are involved with it. Sin is a most important object of consideration, as being the supreme evil, and as having so terrible an influence in this world and in the eternity that follows. Unfortunately there are many obstacles to our understanding it, and some of its phenomena mislead us as to its real nature. 1. We are in the midst of it, overwhelmed by it, and, like men lost in a dense forest, we cannot perceive its magnitude or its bearings. 2. We know it only in the transitory act, and not in the permanent state set up by it, nor in its remoter consequences. 3. We are conscious of it, as a rule, not in its essence as an attack on God's being, but as the desire for some sensible advantage without any reference to God. 4. It generally presents itself to us in some plausible form, as an amiable weakness, a natural and excusable appetite, or even as an act of virtue. The science of disease is necessary if you would maintain your health. You should be able to say of sin in general: "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me" (Ps. l. 5). You must gain this knowledge not from earthly wisdom or current opinions, nor from degrading experience, but from revelation and faith. Ask God to give you a knowledge of good and evil such as will aid you to understand the deep mysteries of His nature and His Providence.

II. Sin must by no means be considered as the momentary act of doing a forbidden thing, any more than a chronic disease consists entirely in the one moment of exposure to cold or malaria. The act which starts the evil ceases at once, the dangerous conditions may be reversed, but the morbid state which has been set up lasts until it has been effectively dealt with; it may operate for years and at last end in death. Sin is not only an act, it is principally the resulting state. That state is the loss of God indwelling

in the soul, the loss of His grace and the supernatural life. The state of privation of life does not cease as soon as the act of sin is over; it remains until it is reversed by repentance and the action of God, and if not so reversed, it is of its own nature permanent, and even eternal. It is as in the physical sphere: submersion in water destroys life, but the ceasing of the submersion does not again restore life; the effect cannot be reversed except by a power which neither the dead body nor any living man possesses. In general this fatal state is produced by a deliberate act contrary God's law and our perfection. In one instance it is produced without our own action or responsibility, *i.e.*, by the inheritance of original sin. How easily and quickly you can exercise the power of destruction! How helpless you are in reversing the fatal act! There is always a great danger that it may never be reversed.

III. Consider what constitutes the state of sin, and what there is in common between so many different forms of sin. It is fundamentally a state of disharmony of the moral being with its exemplar of perfection in God. It is a moral state which is unlike all the rest of creation, in that it has no counterpart in God, presents no resemblance to Him, and has no share in the supreme reality of being and goodness in God, which is the fount of all created being and goodness. Sin is outside God's view of universal being, as reflected in His divine intellect. "Thine eyes are too pure to behold evil, and Thou canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13). The material sinful action is indeed a real force, attended by that general concurrence of God which enters into all our actions; but it sets up a state of supernatural nonentity, and moral inactivity and incapacity. The state of sin is not a positive thing, it is the destruction of that which is positive; it is a protest against the fulness of being and of action as in God: it is to Him as darkness is to light, as disorder to order. Avoid such a horrible, unnatural, abnormal state, lest it be made eternal in you.

16.—THE DIFFERENCES OF SINS.

I. Consider the great multitude of evil actions which cast the soul into the state of sin. The most universal, as affecting all mankind, was the sin of our first father, who forfeited the state of grace and the power of transmitting it, by choosing the natural plane of existence instead of the supernatural. Our sinful deeds are like physical diseases. Every sense and faculty and operation of mind and body is liable to its own irregular action or excess, which casts the whole organism out of order. Every duty we have to perform, every grace we receive, may be an occasion for the exhibition of human perversity. Some of our sins are directly opposed to God, like blasphemy or incredulity; others are an inordinate seeking after temporal goods or a misuse of them—of wealth, food, position, for example—in opposition to the Spirit of God. Certain things are sins because God has forbidden them, such as the violation of the Sabbath or of the laws of fasting on a fixed day; others are forbidden because they are evil in themselves, as being opposed to the eternal fitness of things which depends on God's own nature; such are falsehood, intemperance, lust. We are further liable for sins not our own, for sins that others have committed through our negligence or bad example. How numerous are the perils that beset our path on the right hand and on the left! Who can be on the watch against all, who can know the sum of his daily, or his yearly, or his total responsibilities! "Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord; and from those of others spare Thy servant" (Ps. xviii. 13).

II. The degrees of guilt vary as do the kinds of different sins. St. John speaks about sins some of which are unto death and some not (1 John v. 16). Different sins offend more or less directly against God Himself; they violate more or less important harmonies of man with God; they destroy the resemblance to God's perfections in more or less important points; they do more or less injury to our neigh-

bour; they offend against more or less essential virtues. Further, sins involve on the part of men more or less obstinacy or perversion of the will, more or less resistance to grace or misuse of knowledge, a greater or less stress of temptation. Greater proclivity to a sin from natural temperament or early education, or a diminished power of resisting temptation, may reduce the amount of responsibility by making the sin more excusable. Besides the graver sins, there are others, which, like some diseases, are local and temporary in their effects, which do not disorganize the whole system, and are easily cast off. Such are venial sins and imperfections, to which even saints are liable. "There is no just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not" (Eccle. vii. 21). The various degrees varying with so many circumstances are another element of uncertainty. Never presume to judge harshly of others or leniently of yourself.

III. With all these differences there is a certain identity in all mortal sins. 1. Every one of them is an outrage upon God, whether it be directed against the natural law, or the spiritual, or the laws of our rightful rulers, or whether it be against the good of a fellow-man. This thought should be our restraint from wrong-doing, and not the thought of civil punishment, or of public opinion or the convenience of life. 2. All mortal sins are identical in the general effect of casting forth God and destroying the life of the soul. One sin inflicts this privation, and incurs therefore the punishment of hell as thoroughly as a thousand. So it is said: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law but offend in one point is guilty of all" (Jas. ii. 10). Do not trust to what you are pleased to call your "redeeming qualities." Do not think that wickedness in one respect can be outweighed by goodness in another. Still less will one virtue compensate for a multitude of vices. Neither can any sin be forgiven as long as you retain an affection for a single other one.

17.—THE SEAT OF SIN.

I. "From the sole of the foot to the top of the head there is no soundness therein: wounds, and bruises, and swelling sores; they are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil" (Isa. i. 6). Every faculty and sense and department of human life is affected by a propension to its misuse, arising from the disturbance of equilibrium by the Original Sin. There is now a double impulse in man drawing him different ways, upwards to the supernatural, and downwards to the merely natural level of life. The eyes, the tongue, the limbs, the nutritive, procreative, and nervous systems all tend towards excessive activity. The desires and fears, the impulses and acquisitions for self-preservation tend towards what is false and flattering and gratifying to sense, rather than to that which is noblest, purest, highest, and most beneficial to the larger number. How corrupt is human nature! How miserable is the state of man, so different from that of all other creatures, who maintain the due order of nature and accomplish their functions without failure! What a burden we carry about with us! Aspire to that time of purification, happiness and freedom, when you will be delivered from this servitude of corruption, when you will no longer be obliged to watch every movement for the symptoms of disease, when you will no more be in danger of offending God and losing your soul.

II. The ultimate seat of sin is in the higher consciousness, in the intelligence and reason enlightened by conscience, and in the will guided by them. The other faculties are the instruments through which the mind operates. Sin is in them only because it is previously in the will. When, from any cause, the intellect does not take cognizance of an act or is imperfectly enlightened, or when the will has not given its deliberate consent, there is no sin in the action of the other faculties. There may be sudden, spontaneous

words or acts that precede the advertence of the mind and the verdict of the will, or which are even contrary to the habitual tenor of the will; and these may be either innocent or only partially sinful. There are other actions again which are unconscious or indeliberate but yet responsible, because they are attributable to previous carelessness, or to the deliberate formation of bad habits, or to the exposing of oneself to the occasion of sin. Keep a strict watch in the sanctuary of your soul over the motions of intellect and will, that you may stop the first attempts of sin to invade that temple of God.

III. There are, in the intellect of man acting through the brain, two sets of impulses and forces. One set concerns his present natural life on earth and his immediate individual advantage; the second is concerned with the intellectual, social, and spiritual advantage of the individual, with special reference to God and the human community. These are called the inferior and the superior reason. The will of man stands as a determining power between these two. It is not necessitated by either of the contending forces. Even the judgment of the intellect and the greater weight of argument do not prevent it from determining in a contrary sense. This master-power has control over the brain, in which sense-impressions are stored as impulses to action. The will can suppress the sense-impressions, or at least restrain their action on mind and body, and can revive as sources of action, other impressions derived from the higher intelligence and the suggestion of the Holy Ghost. The seat of sin, in ultimate analysis, is in the will, which refuses to carry out the function dictated by reason and assigned to it by God. If blind passion and the lower impulses at times overcome the resistance of the higher impulses, this is due to the fact that the will has by previous acts acquired the habit of yielding, and has allowed its power to fall into atrophy by disuse. Maintain the vigour and supremacy of your will above all lower impulses.

18.—THE SOURCES OF SIN.

I. As light cannot be a fountain of darkness, so God cannot be in any way the author or source of the state of sin or of the action that leads to it. Sin is the very opposite of God. Therefore "say not, He hath made me to err: for He hath no need of wicked men. The Lord hateth all abomination of error" (Eccli. xv. 12, 13). God is the source of our energy and freedom, and supplies us with the means of action; but He does not determine for us how we shall use these powers. If we choose to act aright, then indeed "it is God who worketh in you both to will and accomplish" (Phil. ii. 13); but when we sin, although the concurrence of God still underlies our existence and physical action, yet the direction of that energy into a sinful channel is entirely our own doing. It is not that God consents to our sin; He consents to and permits our liberty of sinning, which is essential for our virtues. God does not abandon us to sin. Through the operation of external and internal influences independent of our will, we are exposed to opportunities of sin. God does not derange the whole order of the universe to prevent forces from working out their proper effects; but He intervenes in the inner sanctuary of our will with secret aid sufficient to keep us from mortal sin. The influence of God is for ever working adversely to sin, either deterring the sinner or calling him to repentance. Never think that you are coerced by superior force to sin, or that God has abandoned you to your enemies. You have always Omnipotence on your side, provided that you take the appointed means to bring it into action.

II. The temptations of Satan are not the cause of our sin. They furnish the occasion, but they do not necessitate our fall. They are the test of our virtue, and they refine it as the furnace refines gold. They provide us with the materials for struggle and victory as well as for sin. Like everything else, they turn simply to the profit of the elect; they become noxious to us solely by our own negligence. Even

the sin of our first parents is not strictly the cause of our sins. We retain our full freedom and powers nevertheless. If our faculties are subject to an impulsion towards evil, on the other hand we have graces that are potent over this weakness. The work of Christ for us has been more abundant than the evil effects of Adam's bequest of sin. What we inherit from Adam would do us but little harm if our will did not ratify his sinful choice and make it our own. Possessing, as you well may, the all-powerful grace of God, you can stand as an immovable rock, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot drag you into sin against your own will. Be constant in prayer, and then "if God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. viii. 31).

III. While many factors concur towards our sins, the ultimate and only real source is in ourselves. Sin proceeds from our intelligence and will, when they do not resist, as they ought and can, the impulsion of the passions and the triple consequence of the fall. These consequences are ignorance and uncertainty as to truth, weakness and instability, malice or propension towards evil; but far worse than these are the ignorance, weakness and malice that are the immediate result of our own previous sins. Every evil word or thought or action leaves its mark indelibly in our system. For ever after, a second step in the same direction will cost less to take; for ever, a scar or weakness or wound remains, unless a supernatural cure is effected by the grace of God through the soul's repentance and the reconstruction of the body. When sin grows into a habit deliberately persevered in, then it becomes a most fruitful source of further sin and the greatest obstacle to salvation. For all this, every man still remains to the end in the hands of his own counsel (Eccli. xv. 14); and if he fails at last, he has only his own free-will to blame. "Destruction is thine own, O Israel: only in Me is thy help" (Osee xiii. 9). Keep your mind filled always with divine truths and motives of virtue, and your will fixed intently on God.

19.—ORIGINAL SIN.

I. "Behold I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me" (Ps. l. 7). We are sinners from the beginning; we have forfeited our supernatural principality; we have lost a complete system of graces and superadded faculties which God designed to supplement and perfect our natural powers. We are absolutely incapable of attaining to the supernatural level of life here or hereafter; and practically the human race has precluded itself from fulfilling a suitable natural destiny of intellectual and social evolution without special assistance from a superhuman source. The facts of life, no less than revelation, witness to this. Observe the harmonious adaptations of inferior nature, the continual progress, the regular adhesion to law. Plants do not turn obstinately from the sun; animals do not delight in poison for food; the planets, the seasons, the elements keep their appointed course. How different is man! He is prone to evil from his youth; he must be artificially trained and sternly coerced by law lest he destroy both himself and his species, and with all this he is too often a failure. He is out of harmony with his surroundings, his fellow-men, and with the law of his being. His progress is through mistakes, he learns the laws of nature by the penalties of their infraction, his well-meant efforts are often fatal errors, side by side with his improvements new agencies of destruction spring up. All this points to something fundamentally wrong, to some original evil that cannot be from the benevolent hand of God Recognize your misery. See that you are nothing without God. Ask Him for the remedy.

II. The whole analogy of nature shows that this disharmony does not proceed from the hand of God. All His works are perfect, and bear witness to an infinite wisdom, power and goodness. Every creature is perfectly equipped in view of its individual functions and the general purpose of

the universe. Man too, the crown of divine work on earth, must have been created with an equipment of mind and body fitting him for a career of splendour in harmony with his natural elevation. There is only one point where an element of confusion could have entered, the free-will of man. A regulating principle was proposed to him which was to perfect his body and soul, his intellect, will and conscience, which was to maintain him in relations of harmony with God, with other men, with inferior nature. He rejected this, violated the fundamental law of his being; in consequence, a general disorganization took place in every department of human life, and in every generation that proceeded from the head of the race. Truly it was an evil and a bitter thing for man to have left the Lord his God (Jerem. ii. 19). So it is whenever you commit any sin. Its evil effects extend farther than you can anticipate.

III. The effects of the decision of our first parents necessarily fell on all their descendants, in accordance with the law of heredity, and the law of solidarity, or common responsibility and merit in all the deeds of a corporate community. Yet in permitting the stern operation of law, God has shown no harshness towards us. The law which operated in the Fall operates also in our Redemption. The fact that we could be included in the effect of one representative man's sin makes it possible for us to be included in the effect of another Representative Man's atonement. If we have suffered loss in Adam, we have profited much more abundantly in Jesus Christ. The mercy of God has been more plentifully poured out on account of our degradation and misery. Our very sins constitute our most touching claim upon the love of our Maker. The healing of our involuntary sin has had as its corollary the healing of those which are deliberate. Original sin is not indeed from us, but it will be due to ourselves and not to God if we suffer permanently from any of its effects. "Who shall accuse Thee if the nations perish which Thou hast made?" (Wisd. xii. 12).

20.—THE DEFORMITY OF MORTAL SIN.

I. The first deformity in mortal sin has relation to God. A thing is deformed and repellent so far as it departs from its law of existence either in time, place, action, or qualities, or if something that belongs to its nature is deficient, its harmony with other things is destroyed. Sin destroys in us, not some superficial or temporal harmony of colour, form, sound, of organs or of health, but the most fundamental one of all, the moral and spiritual harmony of our soul with God. Sin deprives us of a necessary of life; not of some created requirement, such as food, light, repose, companionship, occupation, possessions, liberty, but of God, the sum of all goodness, the supreme uncreated perfection, the most absolute necessary of life, and actually our life. All the beauty and excellence of the soul consist in its harmony with God and participation in His perfections. Sin is opposed to all this good, and annihilates it in the soul. It is the antithesis of God's goodness and wisdom, of joy and beauty, of peace and glory, of power and authority, of His very being and infinite life. Thus it establishes in the soul a supreme deformity, disorder, irregularity, which affects the whole nature and impairs its utility for its proper purposes, its beauty, goodness, happiness. Ask God to illuminate you with His grace, so that you may be thoroughly convinced of these truths by faith, and so escape hereafter the miserable conviction which is from experience. In one or other of these ways, in time or in eternity, the deformity of sin will be brought home to all; it will come to some as a salutary truth, to others too late.

II. A second deformity produced by mortal sin is the destruction of sanctifying grace. This grace may be compared to a robe of celestial brilliance with which the presence of God endues the soul, a radiation and reflection of the divine glory, transforming the soul into the resemblance of

God. There is a double brilliance in the faithful soul, arising from a double conformity to God, as the head of the natural order and as head of the supernatural order; the one is the reflection of God in human reason guiding man in the way of natural perfection; the other is the supernatural light which perfects man's activity on the level which is above nature. Sin destroys both of these. "How is the gold become dim, the finest colour is changed!" (Lam. iv. 1). This effect is also described as a stain, a foulness, a spiritual disease, loathsome to God and His angels as leprosy. Sin now wears a mask of attractiveness. Its true hideousness will appear one day, and those who thought themselves clothed in scarlet will find that they have embraced dung (Lam. iv. 5). Truly "they that commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul" (Tob. xii. 10). Nothing is so foolish, fatal, and suicidal as sin.

III. These deformities do not affect the soul during the act of sin only, but they remain as a permanent condition or habit after the act has ceased. The poison was swallowed in a moment, but it remains in the system and goes on producing its effect long afterwards. "You sinned with Beelphegor, and the stain of that crime remaineth in us to this day" (Jos. xxii. 17). The will, having chosen the act of sin, has chosen the consequent state of sin, and continues virtually ratifying its choice, until by a formal act of repentance and love of God it recalls that assent. In default of this repentance, the will remains for ever adhering to the sin, and is, most strictly speaking, guilty of an eternal sin, and the consequences of that sin are in like manner eternal. It is not sufficient for you to cease from sin in order to be justified. Many give up sin only because sin has given them up. They have lost the capacity for sin and its enjoyment, but their will has not ceased to adhere to it. Take care that your repentance be sincere; counterbalance your sins by the fervent practice of the contrary virtues.

21.—THE PENALTY OF MORTAL SIN.

I. "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil" (Rom. ii. 9). Punishment necessarily accompanies sin. Sin and punishment are, outside human laws, only different aspects of the same thing. The physical law of nature is law only because its observance has good effects and its transgression evil ones. The same is the case with the moral law and also with the higher supernatural law. The divine law is not a set of arbitrary commands with arbitrary and heterogeneous penalties attached, as in human legislation; but it arises from the nature of things, it is grounded on nature—the divine nature and human nature—and it is given because it makes for our perfection and happiness, and is a preservative against evils. God, like the maker of a machine, knows the purpose of each creature, and its capabilities, and the conditions of its well-being. That knowledge of God communicated to us becomes the natural law, the moral law, the supernatural law, as the case may be. It cannot be other than it is. If we set aside the law, we necessarily lose the advantages inherent in the law; so the law itself avenges its violation. There is no greater folly than for man to think that he can know, better than God, the law of his construction and the right means of working out his destiny, and that he can be a law to himself. No advantage, except something utterly unreal, can follow the breaking of those rules which God declares necessary for our well-being. "Who hath resisted Him and hath had peace?" (Job ix. 4). The one secret of prosperity and remedy for all evils is the observance of the law of God. "This do and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 28).

II. In sin there is a double action, and this involves a two-fold punishment. First, sin contradicts God, destroys the resemblance to Him in man, banishes Him from the soul. This also is the punishment, firstly and chiefly, of sin. The state of sin is the consequence and the punishment of the act of sin. The form which this takes is negative

(more properly *privative*), it deprives the soul of God. In the next world it becomes the *pœna damni*, the pain of loss, which is the chief and the characteristic penalty in hell. Secondly, sin is a turning to creatures; it is a misuse or an excessive use of one's own faculties or of other good gifts of God, and the seeking of one's happiness thereby. Every creature naturally repels wrongful use or attack, and makes it recoil on the head of the aggressor. So material things, other men, society, also a man's own self, body and soul, his powers and senses, and the whole universe whose laws have been violated, with the mysterious fire of hell, rise in recoil against the sinner. So God "will arm the creature for revenge on His enemies" (Wisd. v. 18). "By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented" (Wisd. xi. 17). This is the positive punishment or the *pœna sensus*. This is inflicted in a certain measure on earth when men disregard any law, but most fully in eternity. Unless we seek God in earthly things we shall find no satisfaction in them.

III. God in His mercy gives every possible opportunity of reversing the action of sin and escaping its effects; but if man obstinately refuses repentance, the effects of sin must endure eternally. All observation shows us that forces continue acting in the same direction until a new force intervenes. We find the same to be the case in the intellectual and moral sphere during the course of this life. There is a tendency to repeat the same actions, to be confirmed in the same opinions, to continue as one has begun; and these tendencies grow stronger as time goes on. Habits both of thought and of action become inveterate; even during this life the character becomes so fixed, after a short time, that it is practically unchangeable. The will is often fixed in a certain course; and even when it desires to change the habits of the other faculties it is unable to obliterate the influence of a long course of thoughts and deeds. This is a terrible consequence of sin. Endeavour to reverse its effects during this life.

22.—VENIAL SIN.

I. By the grace of God and the power of the Sacraments, we have it in our power to avoid all mortal sins, to keep ourselves continually in the state of grace, and to allow nothing to separate us from the charity of Christ. Yet we must not take pride in ourselves and believe that we are perfect; "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). Even the highest and the holiest of the friends of God are not perfect; with the one exception of the most blessed of women, to whom the special prerogative of sinlessness was accorded in order that the breath of evil should not approach to the Holy One of God. The saints are allowed to fall into lesser sins or imperfections, so that they may enjoy that claim to God's special tenderness which belongs to the condition of sinners. "In many things we all offend" (Jas. iii. 2). We fail in perfect vigilance, we are surprised through weakness, we are carried away by sudden impetuosity, we overlook or forget things, we grow insensible to certain small infidelities. In all this there is no serious command violated, there is no deliberate rejection of God, no worship of the creature in His place, no serious malice. Such are the things referred to by the wise man, "A just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again" (Prov. xxiv. 16). Humble yourself when you see the multitude of your sins, the imperfection in every act, the unworthiness of your service. "My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head" (Ps. xxxix. 13).

II. Venial sins are small matters as compared with mortal sin. They are without that horrible character of malice and hostility to God which distinguishes mortal sin. They are spots on the sun, but by no means a total eclipse of the sun. They do not extinguish charity, or deprive the soul of its garment of sanctifying grace, or separate the soul from God, or exclude it for ever from heaven. It is not a

matter of strict necessity to confess our venial sins; we may expiate them in other ways by prayers and good works. Yet we must not make light of venial sin. Even the smallest coldness, or negligence, or discourtesy, or ingratitude, is a serious thing against the King of kings and Lord of lords. He who commits venial sin lightly is like those who offered sacrifice in the Temple according to law but presented a blemished victim. The Almighty tells us in the Old Testament that He abominates this kind of filching from the holocaust which is offered to Him. Try to make your service of God quite complete and perfect. If you do the principal part of what is demanded, it is a great pity not to do just the little more that is needed in order to finish off well the work that was well begun.

III. Venial sin must not be despised, for it is a great danger to the soul of the just man if he indulges it freely. Although less than mortal sin, it is still the second greatest evil in the world, it still belongs to the class of sin and insult against God. Its material is the same as that of mortal sin; often it is only a question of degree or of less and more between mortal and venial sin, and the line which separates the two is ill-defined and easily passed. Repeated venial sins cloud the soul over, destroy the delicacy of its spiritual perception, take off the keenness of its desire for God. They also obstruct the operations of God, deprive the soul of the higher graces, and perhaps of some grace which will be absolutely necessary in some critical juncture. The habit of disregarding God grows upon the soul, carelessness passes into tepidity. Easy familiarity in the presence of God's awful sanctity is likely to beget a sort of contempt. Thus venial sin prepares the way for mortal sin. "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little" (Eccli. xix. 1). Protect yourself against the first approaches of calamity, if you would be really safe against it. In matters so important as the service of God and salvation you cannot be too careful.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE IX.

LAWS.

1.—LAW IN GENERAL.

I. It is of the province of theology to consider God in all His manifestations, and among these as Supreme Legislator. He is the first law-giver, is Himself the law, and is the source whence all other laws, and their sanctity, and their binding force proceed. God is Law as being the exemplar to which all our life must be conformed. The ideas and decrees of God, which are to rule our existence, are revealed in the different laws given to us—in the natural law, the moral law, the religious law, the civil law, and in the unwritten laws of progress, health, economics, commerce, and so on. Human actions and their principles, which are man's steps of progress towards his ultimate goal, are closely connected with Law. Conscience, which is our internal guide, must go hand in hand with Law, our external guide, and must be in great measure moulded by it. Our obligations, our rule of right and wrong, the accomplishment of our destiny as citizens of this world and of God's kingdom, are associated at every step with Law. We need to understand its origin, its basis, its obligatory force, its sanctions. Ask God to enlighten you to understand and to respect all law. Let the law of God in all its different forms be your delight and your meditation night and day; so that you may not be misled into following that law of the members which fights against the law of the mind, and which is a law of death.

II. Consider the nature of Law in the abstract. 1. It is a general regulation for our actions, right and just, accordant with reason and virtue, adapted to our natural conditions of life as to time and place. 2. It is appointed by a public legitimate authority. So it is not the will of any private individual nor of our equals, enforced upon us; for such have no right to coerce the action of any being who has received the gift of freedom from God. Only those can

make true laws who hold a delegated power from God, as being the accredited representatives of human society, and charged with the care of the common weal. 3. Law is not for the private advantage of individuals but for the general good of the community. 4. Law has a binding obligatory force on the conscience and will of men; it is not to be considered as a burden to be borne under compulsion and evaded when possible; nor is it a mere persuasion or counsel of perfection. Regard law as a sacred thing demanding a willing obedience for the sake of God and the welfare of society. "Be subject of necessity, not only for wrath but also for conscience' sake" (Rom. xiii. 5). Pray God to guide all legislators, that they may devise laws as the expression of His will, and not as the expression of their own covetousness, or arrogance, or poltroonery, or uncivic hatreds and jealousies, or immorality and irreligion.

III. Formal codes of law backed by some coercive force are necessary in our present imperfect state. Men are ignorant of many branches of divine law, or uncertain about its application, and the individual conscience is not a uniform or infallible guide. Many have a bias towards evil, and are indisposed towards that which they clearly know to be best, and, if left to themselves, would give full rein to their destructive, anti-social impulses. There is need of an authority to limit the liberty of each one in the interest of the liberties of all. There is need of an external aid to help the well-disposed to carry out the internal movements of conscience and grace. There is need of a uniform organizing force to direct individual efforts, and to give them the strength that comes from union, so that they be not dissipated ineffectually. Every form of human association, public or private, secular or religious must have its laws. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God . . . therefore he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2).

2.—THE ETERNAL LAW.

I. By the Eternal Law is meant, not any code that has been promulgated by God in the form of positive or statute law, but the supreme exemplar of all created life, existing eternally in the mind of God. These rules of life are not decrees, but are the ideas of God, or the knowledge which His infinite wisdom has of all creatures and of the mode of life suitable for each one of them. In other words the Eternal Law is God Himself in one particular aspect: for all that is in God is God. Each creature reproduces some one of the innumerable facets of the Infinity of God; so that all the beauty, utility and harmonious adaptation of things arise from the fact that they are conformable to the divine idea, or to the law of their being which is in God, or that they resemble God. In a more special sense, the Eternal Law means God as the model of the moral perfection of rational creatures. This law of divine right reason has always existed, it has a necessary existence, it is immutable, it cannot cease or change, it is independent of promulgation as a positive law. Be grateful for the wonderful advantage you enjoy in having this supreme law so fully promulgated to you. You are in no darkness or uncertainty as to your rule of life, the nature of human perfection, and the means and the time when it will be fully accomplished. This benefit you receive from your religion.

II. The Eternal Law in God is the source of all other laws in the universe. It is manifested in these invariable sequences and harmonies which we call the laws of nature, of growth, of life, or the "nature of things." It is manifested in the positive statute laws of morals and religion, which have been directly revealed by God or developed by the progressive action of the Christian consciousness in the

Church. This same Eternal Law ought also to be, but not always is, the source and model of those laws which human authorities make for the guidance of their communities. "By Me kings reign and lawgivers decree just things" (Prov. viii. 15). In three ways the Eternal Law is the source of human law. 1. Laws are truly laws, and are just and binding on the conscience, from the fact of their conformity to supreme justice in God. 2. The right and the power of legislating proceeds from a delegation of God's authority. 3. The Eternal Law as manifested through Reason, Conscience and Revelation must be the guide of those who would legislate profitably. Seek your own principle of guidance on every occasion, not in any subsidiary authority, or temporal consideration, or private views, but in the ultimate authority of all, the will of God and the example of Jesus Christ. "Look and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee on the mount" (Exod. xxv. 40).

III. As all laws spring from the Eternal Law, so it is there that we must seek for the true principles to guide us in every department of life and activity. The world generally seeks its principles of action elsewhere; its motives are taken from some lower level, or are even dictated by the spirit of evil which raises itself against all that is called God. Then, having violated the fundamental law of all being, men are surprised to find that they have unknowingly violated some subsidiary but important law of human nature or human society. There is an occult connection between the primary law and all secondary ones. When therefore the divine law is set aside, human wisdom finds itself brought to nought, results disappoint expectations, gains are outweighed by the drawbacks that accompany them, successes generate new and greater evils. Therefore "have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own prudence. In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps" (Prov. iii. 5, 6).

3.—THE NATURAL LAW.

I. "Who showeth us good things? The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us: Thou hast given gladness in my heart" (Ps. iv. 6, 7). The Eternal Law which exists in God is in the first instance promulgated to men, not by outward revelation and the imposing of formal statutes, but inwardly in their consciousness. Every rational creature has a certain light from God that is totally deficient in the lower animals, a certain apprehension of good and evil in the intellect, and a certain impulsion towards moral goodness and aversion from evil. This apprehension is spontaneous, and is antecedent to the knowledge that comes from special revelation, or instruction, or human law and custom, although concurrent with them. It comes to us in the course of nature; its object is to guide us in our natural course, so that we may lead a higher life than the animals, who are guided solely by sense; it is therefore known as the natural moral law. Conscience is clearly allied with the natural law; it takes cognizance, however, of more than the natural law; it forms its conclusions from every form of divine law that is manifested to it, and it reduces this law to practice, and makes the application of it to particular cases as they arise. St. Paul describes the universality of the natural law. "The Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things which are of the law . . . who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts within themselves accusing them or else defending them" (Rom. ii. 14, 15). Thank the good Providence of God for thus making spiritual provision for all mankind.

II. The natural moral law as known to men is a participation in the Eternal Law as in God, and has its authority and force from Him. There is then a certain absolute standard

of morality which is always and everywhere identical. It is not the creation of human legislation by kings or parliaments, it does not depend on custom and popular opinion. No human power, however broad its influence, can turn wrong into right or right into wrong. The conscience of mankind has on the whole a true instinct that prevails in the long run against perversions of the moral code. The moral sense may indeed become generally depraved in certain times and places, there may be current fashions of wickedness, the sense of shame in evil-doing may be suppressed. "They are corrupt and abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no not one." But "shall not all they know that work iniquity?" (Ps. xiii. 1, 4). A prevailing moral code may be at variance with the divine code of moral law; but it does not become right because it is prevalent, nor will it exempt transgressors from punishment here and hereafter. Men are not ignorant of true principles though they choose to ignore them. The evidence of results will always aid the conscience sufficiently to distinguish the true from the false moral code.

III. The full moral code does not exist in each individual perfectly, apart from those extraneous aids which God has given. The mind has only a limited participation in the Eternal Law of God, its view is obscured by habit and the example of others. Men may disagree as to secondary principles of morality, and as to their application to different cases. There is an evolution in the apprehension of moral principles as in everything else; the revelation of God is progressive under every form; and simpler ages have acted on cruder notions of morality that were accordant with their low stage of development, but not with our fuller knowledge and cultivated conscience, and God's demands from us. You have a duty in the world to promote the knowledge of the divine law, to help in the evolution of moral ideas, to cultivate the sense of fitness, uprightness, truth, honour, religion.

4.—THE CIVIL LAW.

I. Men naturally and necessarily form themselves into a society, a body with common life and common action, constituting a unity out of the multitude of its members. In every unit, whether it be individual or corporate, there is a primary divine duty of existence and self-preservation. The first necessity for the corporate life of a multitude is organization, the specialization of functions, and the appointment of some to be a centre of force for the ruling and direction of all the others. Sovereignty in the first instance resides in the community generally, and is held and exercised variously according to the character of the community and the conditions of time and place. The chief exercise of sovereignty is the making of laws, and thus the civil legislative power is in accordance with natural law and the eternal law in God. It is an imitation of the divine action, a participation in the rights and authority of God. That power, whether exercised remotely by the community, or immediately by those who actually make the laws, should be used by them as agents of God entrusted with the carrying out of His will. The divine will in this connection is the maintenance of the life of the society by means that are morally good, generally beneficial, and just towards all without infringing on the private rights of any. Even in secular matters men should trace the creating and guiding hand of God, and consider what is His intention. Civil government must so far take account of God in order to its authority, stability, and efficiency in carrying out its first duty of maintaining social life.

II. The corollary of authority is obedience; and here again our civic functions require that we should take God into account. Obedience is due in the first instance to God alone, and it is only due to men in so far as they share by delegation in the divine authority. "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh . . . not

serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord and not to men" (Eph. vi. 5-7). The character of civil government is further elucidated. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. . . . He is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear . . . for He is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil" (Rom. xiii. 1, 4). These principles are very necessary as a motive to obedience and a buttress for civil authority. They secure at once the dignity of the rulers and the ruled. Human authority becomes sacred as representing that which is divine; obedience becomes, not a slavish submission to the greater force of other men, but an honour and glory as rendered willingly to the Godhead in its representatives.

III. As things go at present, men have a double duty in relation to civil laws. Citizenship includes at once sovereignty and submission, contributing to the making of laws and obeying them; so that each one is called upon to act variously as the depository or agent of divine authority, and as subject to it. Each of these functions is equally honourable, equally necessary, equally binding on the conscience. If a man disregard either one of them, he is not likely to fulfil the other conscientiously and usefully. Important duties are thus laid upon all by the natural law, and so by the eternal law of God; and they must not be considered as mere duties of convention imposed by man. No one is an isolated individual; he has been made by God a member of a corporate society with special duties in that respect; and he must not abdicate his duties and rights for the sake of the virtues and the ease of individual private life. All should undertake those duties as a matter of conscience and not of ambition, and with a sense of responsibility towards men and God.

5.—THE MOSAIC LAW.

I. In addition to the natural law implanted in the minds of men, the Almighty was pleased to give a certain positive law consisting of statutes. He has given us this additional law by means of direct revelation, because of the supernatural end proposed to us, which requires further instructions and a better organization than the natural forces of our reason can provide us with. Further, for his full development even in the natural order man would require something more than natural light, for this is incomplete in each individual, and liable to variation and to obscurity. The goodness of God has bestowed on us something more precise and definite, more visible and tangible, something that brings us into closer relations with God, and remedies the miseries and insufficiencies of our fallen condition. From the beginning, accordingly, additional laws were given, as to Adam in Paradise, to Noah after the deluge, to the patriarchs, Abraham, and Moses. Behold the goodness of God which has not left human nature to itself, but gives evidence of constant watchfulness and concern about it. In addition to the law which guides us to a natural perfection, He has given us the law of a much higher and happier life. If we bear this light burden, we shall be rewarded with abundant advantages.

II. The dealings of God in granting systems of law have been accommodated to the condition of mankind in their various stages of natural and social evolution. When men had organized themselves into regular societies, God selected one society, and engrafted on it a new religious system with a full code of laws. The natural and the supernatural development of the Jewish nation went on side by side, each supporting and supplementing the other. The system was not perfect, but was intended to lead up to a final and perfect religious system which should be adapted, on condition of the concurrence of mankind, to

regulate happily both the supernatural and the natural course of humanity. Thus God "who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways . . . left not Himself without testimony" (Acts xiv. 15, 16), while waiting till His Son revealed in the flesh should establish the kingdom of God on earth. The Jewish system consisted of a civil polity with authorized government, and a code of precepts regulating domestic as well as civil life, and the administration of justice, commerce, war, agriculture, hygiene, etc. On this well-grounded natural basis was raised the spiritual system of supernatural truths and laws. Some of these enforced with a new sanction the old precepts of natural law; others were new ceremonial laws about the priestly order, the sacrifices, fasting, and other observances of a mixed social and religious character. All this was admirable, but far more so is that religion which was so splendidly prefigured.

III. The Jewish Law established on a permanent basis the supernatural relations of man with God. It furnished to all ages an example of the dealings of Divine Providence with man, and showed how the action of God and of man are related, and how the supernatural is concurrent with the natural in the historical course of events. It prepared the way before the face of the Messias, making straight the path of His descent from Adam downwards, instead of allowing it to be lost in the dimness of the past like the genealogy of all other men and nations. The combined result of the supernatural and natural elements in the Mosaic system was a living influence that spread from China to the shores of the Atlantic, and instilled into all nations some idea of the Messias and the restitution of fallen humanity. Learn hence the necessary connection between divine law and all branches of natural law. The natural is the basis, the supernatural is the completion. Each must be cultivated. To neglect either is prejudicial to the other.

6.—THE CHRISTIAN LAW.

I. The highest stage of human development on earth was inaugurated by Jesus Christ in the New Law. Mankind was not ripe for this perfect law at an earlier date. The manifestation of God in religion has proceeded by evolution from the simplest to the most perfect form, and was accommodated at each stage to the actual possibilities of humanity. The world had to exhaust its original energies for advancement before the new energies were infused to complete the imperfect work; it had to be taught by experience and failure that its rehabilitation and perfection could come from God alone. The great gift, like all the exceptional gifts of God, had to be earned by desires, prayers, and patient waiting. Now that this law has been given, there is no other to be expected; the work of God so far is complete. None greater than Jesus Christ can come; no other Spirit more efficient than the Holy Ghost can be poured out. Jesus will be with His Church all days even to the consummation of the world, the Paraclete will teach her all truth; there can be no further needs and no further advance. How blessed is the lot of those who live under the present dispensation, and who have eyes to see and ears to hear those things which so many prophets and kings desired vainly! Take care to profit by your privileges; let your life correspond to them in elevation, and not fall to the level of the Jews of old or of the Pagans.

II. The New Law is substantially the same as the Old. The Messias is the central point to which each looks from the different standpoints of promise and fulfilment. The New Law was involved in the Old; the Old is not destroyed by the New but absorbed into it. All the principles and many of the forms of the Mosaic system are found in the Christian; but they are now more perfect, for shadows have given way to substance, and that which was material figure is now spiritual reality. As the Jewish Law ratified and reinforced the pre-existing natural law, so now the

Law of Christ contains all that was substantial in the law of Moses and of nature. It contains the old truths and many new revelations, the same and still higher doctrines of morality, a more perfect worship, sacramental ordinances that are endued with an efficiency of their own, counsels of perfection beyond the reach of Jewish aspirations. A civil and social code of laws Christianity does not impose; for details must necessarily differ according to the varying conditions of provinces in a universal kingdom; and further the religious law contains all the principles that are needed to guide secular legislation and secure our temporal progress and prosperity. Let the unction of the supernatural law overflow upon all your life; and this sanctification will bring every blessing. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

III. The New Law is in every way broader, more elevated, and more efficient than the Old Law. The progress of religion was from the tribal stage to the national stage, and finally to universality. Religion at first was temporary as well as local; the perfect religion is for all time as well as for all men. It combines in itself fixity as it is final, and at the same time a power of adaptibility without substantial change to innumerable sets of circumstances. The Old Law abounded in minute prescriptions which exposed men at every moment to the danger of transgression and punishment; it was a law of bondage and fear. The spirit of the New Law is one of love, liberty, and adoption as sons; its yoke is sweet and its burden light. The New Law is easier, as being free from the intricate ceremonial of the Old, but it is more difficult, as laying before men a much higher standard of life, a supernatural rather than a natural one. But it gives greater graces; so that although too difficult for the half-hearted and sensual, it is easy for the faithful and generous. It depends on yourself whether the Law is to you a burden or a delight. It must be an object of fervent love or bitter hatred.

7.—THE DEPOSITORY OF THE CHRISTIAN LAW.

I. A code of laws duly promulgated and active involves two things. 1. There must be an authority to guard its integrity, administer it, explain it, enforce its observance; else it is a dead letter. 2. The wide prevalence of one code of laws tends to produce uniformity of action and unity of organization. Christianity proposes to us one God, one destination for all men, one set of truths, one law of conduct; naturally these objects should be sought for on one system. Further there are "diversities of ministries," good works to be done, sins and miseries to be grappled with, by a widely scattered multitude. Some centralization is necessary lest efforts clash, energies be frittered away, and disunion lead to the defeat of the cause of good. Multiplicity must be welded into unity. If God had not provided the machinery for this, men would certainly have tried to bring it about by themselves, led by the dictates of ordinary intelligence. But because God has provided for it, the Spirit of Evil in men has induced them very largely to ignore in religion the natural impulse to combination which guides them in every other social action. How blessed you are in being able to see this truth, and in belonging to that great union which is the accredited guardian of the Christian Law!

II. The spiritual order has many analogies with the natural order. In nature God does not carry out every operation by a direct intervention of Almighty power. He created the materials of the universe in one or a few most simple forms, endowed them with most concentrated and fertile energies, and left them to evolve themselves by the regular action of natural agencies. So too did Jesus Christ form the first elements of His kingdom on earth, infuse His Spirit into them, and then withdraw His corporal presence and action from the earth. He indeed hearkens to the voice

of individuals in prayer, He communicates directly with them by inspirations and grace; but the social organization of men in relation to God and the administration of His law have been entrusted by Him to the hands of human agents. God carries on His great work of the salvation of souls, but He invites the co-operation of willing instruments; and success depends to a very great extent on their zeal and prudence. You are a living portion of the Church. You are in some measure the depository of the Christian law and of the Spirit of life. See that you do your full share of work as the instrument of God's operations.

III. Such an authorised depository and guardian is the natural and fitting means of maintaining the Christian Law. To leave it to be dealt with according to the whims and passions of an untrained and irresponsible multitude would be flinging it as a prey to a horde of hungry wolves. The impulse of individualism whether in the realm of doctrine or morals is disintegrating. The feverish activity of many minds, the continual striving after novelty, the mania of self-assertion and notoriety, the variety, the instability, the perversity of opinion which marks even those whose intentions are good, speculation and doubt, interpreting and explaining away, all this must of necessity be fatal to all uniformity and all certainty in the practical application of the law. What else can counteract these tendencies but a clearly established authority, accessible to all, existing everywhere, endowed with faculties for judging, with the right of commanding obedience, and with assurance against error? The Christian Law needs to be enshrined in a universal, undying society, which shall be a standard to the nations, a bond of unity, a fountain of strength. Nationality, language, customs, government, can secure no more than local unity. The Church Catholic is the one social force which can bind the discordant elements into one, and produce a world-wide harmony. Thank God for instituting a Church so great, so powerful, so satisfying to the soul.

8.—THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHURCH.

I. God has committed to His Church a high duty which is far superior to what the individual members are capable of in their private capacity. Her officials can speak with an authority, and advance claims therefore, which would be preposterous in any who had not received the same divine commission. It has been said to them, "The Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28). No plenitude of power could be greater than that which the Founder of the Church conveyed to it in the person of its chief pastor. "To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). This authority, conveyed by God Himself, justifies the claim of the Church that she should be believed and obeyed by all in spiritual matters; it justifies the faithful in trusting implicitly to such a guide, for such a trustfulness is trust in Christ Himself. No man or body of men could claim such a position; no gifts of talent or virtue, no commission from earthly rulers, no degree of personal influence and popular appreciation would justify any man in assuming to speak as the Church speaks, or would justify others in submitting their liberty to his control. You are able to say, applying the words at once to Christ and to His Church, "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him" (2 Tim. i. 12). Rejoice in this security.

II. The authority given to the Church and the injunctions laid on us to listen and obey, should be a sufficient assurance to us. We require no further guarantee than St. Paul did when he was bidden by God to consult Ananias, or Cornelius when St. Peter was sent to him. God takes upon Himself the responsibility for the consequences; and if we should be misled, we could say, "It is Thou Thyself who

hast misled us" (St. Aug.). But God does more than guarantee us impunity in case of error through obeying Him. He assures us against all error from the teachings of His delegates. The Church has full knowledge: "The Holy Ghost . . . will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John xiv. 26). The voice of the Church is the voice of Jesus Himself: "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke x. 16). The Church can never fail, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). For our still greater assurance, Our Lord refers specially to the Apostle who was the head of the twelve and the mouth-piece of the teaching Church: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted confirm thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). Trust the Church most fully, as the appointed guide who will certainly bring you to God. Be loyal to her, venerate and love her.

III. From the possession of divine authority and infused capacity to administer the divine law there follow the other qualifications which the Church exhibits in her action. In every age there must be the scandal of those who refuse to obey the command of Christ, but they are the minority in the world-wide empire of the Church. She has the power of inspiring an unexampled confidence in men, of ruling their intelligence without compulsion, and convincing them, in incredulous and rebellious times, of her divine mission. She has an unexampled power of dealing with men of every country, of every grade of civilization, of every age, and of binding all these into one majestic unity. She has the power of winning the affections of all who are not plunged in ignorance or vice, and commanding the interest of all men whether benevolent or hostile. She has the power of raising souls in wonderful numbers to the practice of the highest virtues and to intimate union with God. If you be docile, the Church will work all this in you, and show you the way of peace and salvation.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE X.

GRACE.

1.—THE NATURE OF DIVINE GRACE.

I. The first man had been raised by God above the level of the rest of the universe, and even above the level that was proper to him. Besides human nature and all its powers, he received a further and higher endowment, *viz.* the state of integrity and original justice, a gratuitous gift superadded to what was natural. With this double endowment he was to work out his destiny. Original sin was the rejection of the supernatural endowments, and descent to the natural but now fallen level. The faculties of human nature remained substantially intact, but with a tendency towards evil. Man thenceforth was dead as regards the supernatural life and state; of his own strength he cannot regain it; he can do nothing of supernatural value deserving a supernatural reward; he can in no way place himself in communication with the Infinite; only the action of Jesus Christ, God and Man, can do this for him. This restitution or re-elevation to the higher state comes from Our Lord as a purely gratuitous gift, or as Grace. Consider how lowly, with all its excellence, is your natural state; how valueless its great endowments, efficient only in this life and before the eyes of men, but worthless for any use in the kingdom of glory. You need a totally different set of qualities for the divine life. Seek these. If you attain them, all else is of but small account.

II. The vocation of man, though he is fallen, is nevertheless to the supernatural life in this world and the next; but he has to attain to it under other conditions than the original ones. Every creature needs to be adapted to its surroundings, and equipped so as to accomplish its purpose. God, whom we have to attain, is the essentially supernatural; the means by which we attain to Him are also supernatural, from their association with Him, or by participation. Of all this we are utterly incapable by ourselves, and yet God calls us to it and makes it the chief duty of our lives. We need for this a special equipment,

and a certain new adjustment of our faculties to that end. God gives us this in forms that we call Grace. By it we are able to do all that is required of us; the impossible becomes possible; that which is utterly beyond and above us becomes a second nature. We are enabled to check the impulses of passion, to resist all temptations, to rise superior to ourselves. Grace is not God Himself, it is not God's love for us, it is not pardon or favour in His sight, it is something different from our natural gifts of intelligence and liberty, and from the means of grace, *viz.* God's word and the Sacraments. It is an invisible supernatural influx of God upon our souls, helping all, and especially the just, for such purposes as transcend our natural powers. How great is this bounty of God! How little you have deserved it! How high it raises you!

III. The variety and richness of God's operations in the natural order must be far exceeded in the higher and more important sphere of the supernatural. Grace is the universal and all-efficient power in that sphere. We classify the graces of God according to the effects that He works in us. There are graces which help us in every good action, graces which are for the advancement and benefit of others, and the grace which is a permanent habit of the soul possessing supernatural life. Grace first stimulates us to action, helps us in it, gives us strength according to our special needs, and is always operating in the spiritual universe. Grace may be compared to the ether, the invisible fluid that escapes our investigations but is known by its effects to be present throughout creation. It fills the vast celestial spaces and on this earth it penetrates freely the most solid substances. Secretly and silently it conveys the great cosmic forces, heat, light and electricity in its vibrations. So the grace of God is secret but ever really present, it surrounds us, and fills our lives, and conveys to us in multitudinous ways the infinite action of God. Place no obstacle to the continual influx of this divine gift into your soul.

2.—GRACES "GRATIS DATÆ."

I. It is the duty of all to work with Jesus Christ in the establishment of His kingdom, the communication of knowledge, the gaining and elevation of souls. The duty of imitating Him includes the carrying on of His functions in our own imperfect way, enlightening, interceding, suffering. In these works Our Lord exercised more than ordinary human powers. His Divine Personality was the source of countless activities which transcended nature; and He grants some participation in these graces and powers to such as labour with Him, and thereby He makes them still more to resemble Him. The work is high and difficult, and requires special endowments, which are accorded in a notable degree to the great saints, the Apostles and other ministers of Christ, and in a lesser degree to His humbler coadjutors. Every one may labour for Christ in the spiritual vineyard. This work is not for a class of men only, but for all. If any wish to labour thus, God will open a way to them and show them opportunities in abundance lying ready to their hands. He provides useful employment for every one who sincerely desires it. There is so much in the world to be done and so few who care to inconvenience themselves for the love of God and their sorrowing brethren! These words are said to you also: "Labour in all things, do the work of an Evangelist, fulfil thy ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 5). Do not plead that you have no opening or that you are incapable. The graces "gratis datæ" are graces given to remedy such deficiencies.

II. St. Paul enumerates the diversities of divine operations and human ministries which are assigned to men not for their personal sanctification but for the utility of others. Such are the words of wisdom and of knowledge, a special faith, the grace of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of them (1 Cor. xii.). These were for the most part exceptional powers granted in great abundance to the

early Christians on account of their more urgent needs. But there are other graces "gratis datæ" of a less exceptional kind. Such is the promise of Our Lord: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist or gainsay" (Luke xxi. 15). Such also are clearness of insight by faith, precision of thought, power of expression and persuasion, tact and judgment, influence and efficacy in work. Gifts of this kind may well be expected by those who labour for God relying on His word. These gifts are the cause of the great success of the ministers of the Church, much more than its merely natural qualifications of organization, discipline, knowledge of the world. Seek out some work on which you can employ your abilities for God's sake, and rely on His assistance. "Ask of God who giveth to all abundantly . . . and it shall be given" (Jas. i. 5).

III. The graces "gratis datæ" are almost invariably associated with great personal holiness as part of its reward, but they are by no means necessarily accompanied by it. Wicked men even, like Balaam and Caiphas, have been entrusted with prophetic gifts for the instruction of others but with no profit to their own salvation. St. Paul speaks of the possibility of one having the power of miracles and yet being without charity or the supernatural life (1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3); and of becoming reprobate after preaching to others. Some also who have prophesied and cast out devils in Christ's name will be rejected by Him as workers of iniquity (Matt. vii. 22, 23). These gifts therefore have not necessarily a sanctifying influence on him who possesses them, nor are they always a sign of actual sanctity, nor of predestination; they are "gratis datæ," that is given without the expectation of a necessary return from him who receives them. Do not desire exceptional gifts; they are even sources of danger because of their distinction: "but be ye zealous for the better gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 31), the humbler and more secret gifts of holiness and the love of God.

3.—ACTUAL GRACE.

I. God gives us many external aids to help us in our spiritual life—parents, teachers, education, books, sermons and even the ordinary incidents of life. These are sometimes in a broad sense called graces. But besides these we need an inward aid from God to accompany the outward one and make it profitable. This is Grace, strictly so called, and this is the efficient power in our lives. St. Paul therefore says: "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he that planted is anything, nor he that watered, but God who giveth the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7). Actual grace, or the grace that accompanies our good actions, is a transient movement of supernatural influence, which enlightens the understanding and strengthens the will, directing us towards some good action and helping us in its performance. It includes an anticipating or "prevenient" grace, which precedes our demand and is not dependent on our will, and a subsequent assistance which enables us to give effect to the previous one after we have entertained it and corresponded to it. Grace is not an exercise of omnipotence breaking down all opposition and forcing the will; it is the breathing of a gentle wind of persuasion, which we can act upon or reject as pleases us. Watch for the movements of the Spirit of God, and be careful never to thrust them aside. Do not expect them to compel you and save you the pangs of self-sacrifice. You have to act and do violence to yourself before the strength of grace is revealed in you.

II. Scripture impresses on us most frequently the insufficiency of our own good-will and actions by themselves, and the all-importance of divine grace. Our Lord says: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you the branches . . . without Me you can do

nothing" (John xv. 4, 5). St. Paul adds: "God who is rich in mercy . . . hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved) . . . for by grace you are saved through faith; and this not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works" (Eph. ii. 4-10). And again: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). Human nature is like an engine of intricate construction with its numerous and well-adjusted parts, adapted to give motion to a hundred smaller machines; but all its elaboration is dead and useless until the fire is kindled and the steam rushes through the cylinders, to start and maintain with regularity the numerous motions of every piston and wheel. Man with his wonderful organization and powers is dead and useless if he seek his motive power elsewhere than in the grace of God. Never attempt anything without asking divine aid.

III. The graces of action, whether stimulating it or carrying it on, are poured upon us incessantly by God, and in many different forms. Creatures are often the vehicle of God's action; we ought to see Him and hear Him in all of them. Lower nature, mankind, especially God's favoured servants, the events of life, are not only manifestations of God to our intelligence but aids to holy actions. An object or an occurrence may suggest some vivid thought of our sinfulness and misery, of God's greatness and goodness, of the vanity of the world, or of the transcendent importance of the future life. Or we feel some impulse springing up casually or causelessly, whispering to us to do some act of worship towards God, penance for our sins, benevolence towards our neighbour. The chief use of our present surroundings, whether agreeable or painful, is to speak to us of the supernatural and forward our salvation. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen" (Rom. i. 20). Seek out this meaning in all things.

4.—THE NECESSITY OF ACTUAL GRACE.

I. The natural endowments of fallen man are very extensive. He has a love of truth, great powers of investigation, and he is able to recognize the Author of nature as God and ascertain some of His perfections. Still this natural knowledge is limited. It is true to say now, no less than formerly: "Man can find no reason of all those works of God that are done under the sun: and the more he shall labour to seek so much the less shall he find; yea, though the wise man should say that he knoweth it, he shall not be able to find" (Eccle. viii. 17). The natural intelligence falls still further short of the great system of truths that belong to the higher state which God calls man to enter. Those truths are the basis on which our supernatural life must be built up. We cannot arrive at them by our power of natural penetration; and even when they are propounded to us by God through human teaching, we are still unable to assimilate them without an infusion of grace and the faculty of faith from God. Every one is capable of hearing of Our Lord and knowing Him historically; yet "no man can say, The Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). We may have natural knowledge, but it is not sufficient; for all that, "No man can come to Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him" (John vi. 44). You stand in absolute need of actual graces to enable your intelligence and will to grasp the truths of the supernatural order. Prayer is necessary rather than critical analysis. Those who fall from the state of grace are very likely to lose their intellectual grasp of certain higher truths which previously seemed incontrovertible.

II. Graces of action are further necessary for the observance of the supernatural law. The natural man, it is true, is able, through the influences of a careful education or of refined society, to do many actions of high moral excellence, such as may surpass even the aims of such and such men who live by the life of the Spirit. But yet these acts of admirable virtue are on the lower level, and have no

relation to the supernatural, or claim to an eternal reward. They receive, however, their full reward in the natural order. So it was with the midwives of Egypt (Exod. i. 20) and with Nabuchodonosor (Ez. xxix. 18-20). They also move God to accord the higher light, and prepare the soul to accept it, as the alms of the pagan Cornelius were remembered in the sight of God (Acts x. 31). Natural powers are limited even in their own sphere, and there are some natural virtues to which they cannot attain. So Solomon says: "As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it . . . I went to the Lord and besought Him" (Wisd. viii. 21). Still more does natural goodness fail to reach the high standard proposed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Grace is necessary, and with grace all is possible. The Christian ideal may be incompatible with the present age; but only in so far as men of the present age are without grace, and refuse to seek it.

III. Every one stands in need of the graces of action at every moment. The sinner needs them that he may be awakened from the sleep of sin and brought back to God. The just man cannot persevere in his virtues by force of his good habits and firm resolution. Past fidelity makes it easier to continue well, yet each new act of virtue proposed to a man requires a new influx of grace to enable him to accept the proposal and carry it out. No one can ever stand alone, he is always absolutely dependent on God, whether he be just or sinner; and at the end of a long life of faithful service, as at the moment of taking the first step, he needs assistance and support a thousand times every day. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to His good will" (Phil. ii. 13). The grace of God is the daily bread of your soul, an absolute necessary of life. You need to provide yourself daily with a new supply for your daily needs. Grace is granted in answer to prayer; and your prayer needs to be constant and daily, and even hourly. Any neglect of it entails on you a serious loss.

5.—PREPARATION FOR JUSTIFICATION.

I. The first movement in the path which leads to our justification and supernatural life and salvation is simply and entirely from God. Even the consciousness of our misery and the oppressive effects of our sins will not lead us to take the first step of calling upon God for relief. The first actual step is God's call to us and a motion impressed on us. We cannot merit this by any natural actions of our own, however good they may be. We cannot repent of our sins, begin to resist temptation, or change the tenor of our lives on our own initiative. Still less can we apprehend God, appreciate Him, desire and love Him, but by the grace of God calling us to do these things. We cannot call upon His name until He has suggested the idea and moved us to accept it. Even the first conscious motion of the soul towards God is not of ourselves but inspired by Him. "No man can come to Me unless it be given him by My Father" (John vi. 66). "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). Beware lest you take credit to yourself for having approached to God in the first instance, or for any subsequent fidelity. Remember also that those who approach to the consideration of divine truths in a spirit of self-sufficiency, relying on their own attainments, and scorning to humble themselves and pray for guidance, will remain for ever in the obscurity of the natural order, and will never attain to God or His truths.

II. Before man attains to justification and the supernatural life, there is, however, need for his action in listening to the first call of God and working in conjunction with Him. In every instance it is necessary to make straight the way of the Lord and prepare His paths. "They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and in His sight will sanctify their souls" (Eccli. ii. 20). St. Augustine tells us that though God begins His work in us without our co-operation,

He will not finish it to our salvation unless we work with Him. God also says to us, as of old to the Jews: "Turn ye to Me and I will turn to you" (Zach. i. 3). The preparation which a man is called to make is sometimes the remote and indirect one of good works of natural morality performed in the state of infidelity or even of sin; but the more immediate preparation consists in listening to the voice of God and of conscience, admitting true principles and arguing them out fearlessly to their conclusions, resisting sin when tempted by its advantages or the example of others, believing God's words, trusting Him and desiring Him. Prepare your soul for new graces so as to be capable of receiving them, and be not as a man who tempteth God.

III. It is fitting and even necessary that, while God does so much towards our justification, some effort should be demanded of us by way of preparation. 1. Man's highest prerogative is his freedom. The exercise of it must be a chief element in the accomplishment of his great destiny. 2. Justification is more honourable to man when he has been a willing agent in it. 3. A thing is more valuable to men when it has cost them some effort to obtain it, and the risks have been great. 4. The demonstrated necessity of virtuous actions stimulates men to multiply them, with glory to God and benefit to the world. 5. All things must be in harmony with their environment. The new wine must be in new wine-skins. It would be a perturbation of essential order, and so an impossibility, for the great gifts of God, justification and sanctification, to find a place in a soul while it is out of harmony with them. It is the special duty of man during this life to accommodate himself to the divine environment. He has to work upwards to the higher level from the fallen condition inherited from his first parents. His continuance in the state of justification requires always a continuance of God's grace and of his own efforts. Always therefore "labour the more that by good works you may make sure your vocation and election" (2 Pet. i. 10).

6.—THE DISTRIBUTION OF GRACES.

I. Nature exhibits to us an enormous prodigality of creative power and bounty poured forth upon the universe in a measure which exceeds all requirements. Compare for instance the heat and the light of the sun, which is capable of doing so much, and of which only one ninety-seven-millionth part is utilized. Still more is this the case in the spiritual order which is nearer to God, and which is for the supreme advantage of the highest of creatures. The superabundance of creative and redeeming graces are intended for all mankind without exception, and are actually poured forth on them, in varying measure. The Father in heaven "maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). His Eternal Son is "the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (John i. 9). To every soul are offered all kinds of external helps and opportunities of virtue, with corresponding interior impulsions of grace. The abundance of these favours not only exceeds all human deserts, but exceeds even the superabundance of human guilt. Temptations are almost irresistible, the disadvantages we labour under are numerous and heavy, but God's graces outweigh them all, if only men would consent to avail themselves of them. Never say that God's requirements are too difficult or that grace has failed you. However much may be demanded of you, you can say, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

II. God's graces are given with particular richness to His faithful ones who struggle with their natural frailty to serve Him. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers" (Ps. xxxiii. 16). Those who hope in the Lord can always testify that they have never been confounded; in the midst of all the troubles inseparable from the present life, they always find abundant reason for recognizing the tender watchfulness of the All-merciful, and the unceasing flow of temporal and spiritual graces.

But sinners are by no means excluded from God's mercies. However abominable their crimes and great their obduracy, these can never be greater than God's desire for their repentance and salvation. "Thou hast mercy on all because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance. For Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made. . . . Thou sparest all, because they are Thine, O Lord, who lovest souls" (Wisd. xi. 24, 25, 27). There are some who lack all visible opportunities and who almost seem to be outside the pale of salvation; but to them God gives means of salvation according to their needs, in ways unknown to us. If some sinners receive but little grace, it is because they have hardened their hearts and made them no longer sensitive to grace, or because they will not use the infallible means of obtaining it in prayer. Thank God for His immense and universal bounty.

III. "Star differeth from star in glory" (1 Cor. xv. 41). Some vessels are made for more and some for less glory. The completeness of God's work requires that there be innumerable diversities. God chooses some, through no merits of their own, for higher functions and a higher place in heaven; and their graces are proportioned to their destiny. This however does not make their salvation more secure. Greater graces involve heavier responsibility, greater dangers, and more terrible consequences in case of failure. "To whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more" (Luke xii. 48). A greater degree of fidelity, a higher interest on the talents lent, is required from those more favoured by grace. Many who have received the highest graces have failed; and those who receive less often profit by it the more. Be contented with the spiritual state to which God has called you. Make the most of your graces. You have been specially blessed by God; take care that you profit more than those who have been placed on a lower level.

7.—THE BEGINNINGS OF GRACE.

I. God is our supreme Master. We have no claims on Him. He has no obligations towards us, and is actuated only by His infinite equity and love and gratuitous generosity. In particular, the higher state which transcends nature is beyond all our requirements and all our power of earning it. When we had lost it in Adam, God was in no way bound to restore it to us; and still less when, after it had been restored, we forfeited it again by our own personal revolt. Even if God had left us in the simply natural state to carry out a temporal work here as part of the general cosmic process, and then to cease from existence like the beasts—even that would have been an immense favour for us, and beyond our deserts. But God has chosen to make a new beginning with us, and to bring about the accomplishment of His original design in another way. He has not straightway replaced us in the state of integrity and the fulness of supernatural life from which we had fallen. That has now become a progressive work, proceeding from small beginnings and gradually mounting to its perfection. "The path of the just, like a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). Be grateful that He has not left you in your fallen state, but started you afresh. Strive earnestly and pray that "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6).

II. The highest of God's graces are not bestowed indiscriminately on all men, nor from the first; but a sufficient incipient grace is given to all to lead them ultimately to holiness and eternal life. All of mankind have been brought out of the mass of perdition to this extent, that they are entirely relieved of their inability to rise to the supernatural state. Some sufficient means, varying indefinitely according to different cases, has been provided for all without exception. Not only those who, as God foreknows, will be saved, but even those whom He knows to be repro-

bate, receive ample opportunities of salvation. Christ died for all sinners, and the graces He purchased are fully at their disposal. "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ez. xxxiii. 11). The prodigality of God's grace is perhaps shown more abundantly in the case of sinners than in the just, for their greater misery appeals more to the pity of the Saviour. The first call comes to every one: God begins His work in every soul: the further advance and completion depends on the way in which we follow up the operation of grace. God's light and strength have not failed you, nor ever will, however great your unworthiness. You may not have received all that you desire, but you have received the beginning. Be faithful and the rest will follow.

III. The first grace given by God is generally incipient only and incomplete; it does not convey the fulness of light and strength. It is not sufficient by itself for the whole working out of salvation, but it is sufficient in that it leads to the ampler graces which will lead to the final goal. Men have to struggle painfully from one stage to another. Progress implies a previous incompleteness. They must prove themselves faithful in few things before they are set over many. So the glimmering star which appeared to the wise men in the East was by no means a full revelation of the Divine Child at the first; it even failed them for a time. But they were faithful to the scantiest indications, they used their natural opportunities to supplement the supernatural ones, and they arrived at the cradle of the Messias. A similar grace is accorded to all men, but many are glad to excuse themselves on the ground of its dimness and uncertainty; they neglect to follow it up as far as it leads, and they tempt God by expecting that He will send them the ulterior grace that will convince them without their own exertions. Be faithful to the earliest and slightest movements of grace. A tiny rill is sometimes the first source of a gigantic river. A momentary folly may stop a long progression of graces.

8.—THE OPERATION OF GRACE.

I. There are two factors in the operation of grace, God's action and man's action; each is fully efficient, each is necessary. God is omnipotent and can do as He wills; man is free and can do as he wills. Man cannot begin or carry on the work without God; God will not complete it without man. The mystery of grace consists in the interaction of these two forces. They seem to conflict with one another. We cannot say how they harmonize, and how each exercises its full action without detriment to the other. Scripture sometimes speaks as if all depended on God alone. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh . . . and I will cause you to walk in My commandments and keep My judgments and do them" (Ez. xxxvi. 26, 27). At other times it seems as if all depended on man. "You have your choice. Choose this day that which pleaseth you, whom you would rather serve. . . . You are witnesses that you yourselves have chosen you the Lord to serve Him" (Jos. xxiv. 15, 22). We indeed decree and do that which works out our salvation, but God grants us to do both, and operates in us. The mystery is insoluble. St. Paul replies to questioners: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. ix. 20). But the practical conclusion is certain: Do what in you lies and God will never fail you.

II. The action of divine grace on the soul always has some effect; it always communicates the power of doing aright; it is always sufficient for its purpose, either as giving us the power of action or as putting us in the way of obtaining it by prayer; and this is the case even when we resist its operation. The grace of God is all-powerful, but it is never violent; it attracts us and strengthens, but it never compels the will or forces obedience. It wins the will to subjection, but does not reduce it to impotence or captivity. God is able to combine His omnipotence with

our independence, and to order all things sweetly while reaching from end to end mightily (Wisd. viii. 1). Like to this is the action of God on the faithful through the Church. There are those who cannot conceive of liberty except in the form of revolt against authority, nor of submission except as an enforced slavery. But the children of God understand the union of liberty with due submission. They can believe, not indeed from full understanding, but with firm intellectual conviction; their submission is complete, not out of fear for man, but out of respect for God's authority; their service is honourable because it is willing, and their liberty remains intact. Offer yourself to God that He may work His will in you. Ask Him to mould your thoughts, beliefs, affections, and actions. Make His will yours.

III. In the work of salvation all "our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5), yet at the same time everything depends on ourselves. God operates all good in us, yet it rests with us whether He shall act or not. The destructive action of sin proceeds from our will alone. Our constructive spiritual action consists in acting in unison with grace, consenting to the good that God proposes to us, allowing Him to act in us, submitting ourselves to His omnipotent will. God is the cause of all supernatural action in us; our will is not the cause, yet it allows the cause to act, and in a sense makes it efficient. We may compare this to a watch or clock. The motion originates in the main-spring and not in any particular wheel; yet it is absolutely necessary that this should be in its place and should be in good working order; for if it be clogged and stiff or motionless, the main-spring will not be able to produce its effect. All depends on God, in the sense that He originates and carries out all good in you and with you; all depends on you, in the sense that your perverse action can obstruct all the work of God, and that all is possible when you co-operate with Him. See how necessary your action is, your fervour, zeal, energy, perseverance. Do not be wanting in any respect.

9.—RESISTANCE TO GRACE.

I. The resultant of the combined action of the two forces, divine grace and the human will, is by no means uniform. The perturbing element is contributed by man. The divine element is always the same; it moves us towards good; it is sufficient to enable us to carry out good deeds. God does not mock us by giving an insufficient grace and holding us responsible for unavoidable failure. Every grace is potentially efficacious, either in itself or in the further grace that it leads to. The first small grace contains an advancing series of greater ones, as the acorn contains the oak: faithful and diligent culture will bring the seed to its maturity. A heavenly inspiration is never so weak but that a man of good-will may find in it all the assistance that he needs. The enlightenment and grace that brought the Magi to Bethlehem, that converted the Samaritans and the thief on the cross, that secured the adhesion of Nathaniel and the faith of the Apostles at Cana, were to all appearance far less forcible than the graces that were lavished on others and resisted by them. Treasure up and act upon the earliest and weakest suggestions of grace. "Let not a particle of the good gift escape thee" (Eccli. xiv. 14). Never think of the obstacles that nature opposes to the supernatural. Let it suffice for you that God's grace has called you to a certain course, and be sure that His call carries strength with it sufficient to carry you through all difficulties.

II. The grace of God is strong and in a sense all-powerful, yet it is never so strong but that man retains the strength to resist it if he will. It would seem well-nigh impossible for the contemporaries of Our Lord to resist conviction in face of His miracles, His words, His character, and the exact accomplishment of prophecy in Him. Yet Scribes and Pharisees, Caiphas, Pilate and Herod denied the facts first, then ignored them, then refused to admit the only inference that followed from them. Even if their own terms of belief

had been granted, and conviction had been forced on their minds, they still would not have surrendered their hearts to Him whom they dreaded and hated. Many carry their liberty to this fearful extreme. St. Stephen describes them in plain terms: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts vii. 51). And God says to them: "I called and you refused: I stretched out My hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all My counsel and neglected My reprehensions" (Prov. i. 24, 25). Even to this extreme you may come if you begin with trifling infidelities to grace. "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little" (Eccli. xix. 1).

III. The marvellous graces of God are often rejected by men and reduced to impotence; and thus souls are lost for whom the amplest provision had been made. Some devote themselves to mundane pursuits that leave no time for attention to the things of eternity. Others make some transient effort to follow the call of grace, but do not persevere so far as to abandon themselves to God. Many close their minds against the light from God; they do not wish to know too much, lest their tranquility be disturbed or their conscience urge them to a course that will be prejudicial to their earthly interests. Their will, dominated by sense and passion, forces their mind to find some arguments against its unwelcome intellectual convictions. There must be much of this in the world. Scripture shows its prevalence among the people of God. Nature shows us the great waste of cosmic energies and of terrestrial life in proportion to what survives and acts. We cannot judge of individual cases, but we may be sure that in the higher sphere of life there is a corresponding superabundance of spiritual energy and enormous waste of it by men. It is encouraged by the secrecy of the sin and impunity in this world. You have rejected numerous graces. Recall those cases, ask God for pardon, resolve to be faithful in future.

10.—THE WITHDRAWAL OF GRACE.

I. Every action or force produces its adequate effect, and this, according to Scripture, is often attributed to God. Resistance to grace has as its effect the hardening of the heart and the aversion of the will from God. This is spoken of as a punishment inflicted by God: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he hearkened not to them" (Ex. ix. 12). And of rebellious Israel the Lord says: "I will show you what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof and it shall be wasted. . . . And I will make it desolate; it shall not be pruned and it shall not be digged, but briars and thorns shall come up: and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it" (Isa. v. 5, 6). The more literally correct aspect of punishment is set forth elsewhere: "Israel hearkened not to Me. So I let them go according to the desires of their heart: they shall walk in their own inventions" (Ps. lxxx. 12, 13). The punishment inflicted by God and the natural consequence of the resistance to grace are one and the same thing. Considering it in one aspect, it is necessary always to bear in mind the other. God works out salvation indeed in us and with us; but our eternal loss He does not work out in us or with us, any more than He works in us sin, and the rejection of grace, and hardness of heart. "Destruction is thine own, O Israel: only in Me is thy help" (Osee xiii. 9). The severity and sternness and rigour of God are not so much in Him as in yourself; but still they are a dread reality which you may easily incur.

II. The withdrawal of grace and the abandonment of the sinner do not properly mean that God loses patience, that His pity changes to resentment, and that He withholds the necessary means of conversion and salvation; but a change which has that same effect has been worked by the sinner in himself. The whole of this life is a time of probation, and God never really abandons any man, or passes sentence of reprobation before the time. However, subject always to the possibility of later repentance, the sinner gradually

advances during this life in the privation of God's grace. At each moment he reaps what he has already sown. Indifference to grace leads to strenuous resistance, this becomes spontaneous and almost indeliberate ; insensibility to grace sets in, and this verges into judicial blindness, which is the incipient stage of reprobation. Powerful graces become inefficient ; the brain responds at once to the impulses of passion and sense from constant yielding ; there is an increasing blindness to the truth of one's real position ; moral sensitiveness goes, change of heart becomes almost hopeless, and the soul falls under the dominion of Satan. This is the filling up of the measure of iniquity. No punishment can be more fearful than what the sinner thus inflicts on himself. You have no reason to doubt of the infinity of God's patience and mercy ; but you may well fear for your own gradual deterioration and obstinacy, and their direct consequences. Pray God to guard you against yourself.

III. The venial sins of the just have something of the same effect. The higher graces of God are more sensitive to counteracting influences ; as increased rapidity of motion is impeded in a still higher increasing ratio by the resistance of the air. As souls approach nearer to God, so does it become more important for them to avoid every minute negligence and infidelity to grace. Any relaxation of spiritual tension leads to an immense loss of the higher favours of God ; and all defects become more visible in the brighter light, like stains on cloth or motes in the sunbeams. The smaller infidelities to grace have also a great effect on the efficiency of our works for Christ. They cause sterility of action, sterility of word, sterility of thought, sterility of affections, sterility of purpose, sterility of God's consolations (Rich. a St. Vict.). Who can tell how much you have thus lost ! How much more would the all-powerful grace of God have wrought in you for your own advancement and the good of others but for the petty obstacles of venial sins, for remissness in renouncing self and in giving yourself up entirely to God !

11.—SANCTIFYING GRACE.

I. There is another operation of God in the soul besides the transient and occasional impulse to the performance of good works. Graces of action do not accomplish all the work and bring man into close union with God. There is a further grace or rather a state of grace, or a permanent quality infused into the soul by God, or vesting it like a garment; its effect is to render the soul itself holy, just, pleasing, and the adopted son of God and heir to eternal life. It is not precisely the presence of God, although it involves that presence; it is not the moral perfection of the will; it is not virtue, although it conveys the facility or potentiality for certain virtues. It is a gift of God closely associated with Charity, or the state of loving God and being loved by Him. The same powers and effects are attributed to this grace as to Charity. "The charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). It is called habitual, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, or the grace that makes us acceptable to God (*gratum faciens*). Some actual graces are always anterior to this. They are such as can be bestowed on a man in the state of sin, in order to lead him to the good work of repentance. When these have been accepted and carried into effect, the sinner attains to justification or the state of delivery from sin. Sanctifying grace is the gift by which God operates these effects. Ask God for grace to understand this gift, to value it, and to guard it safely.

II. Sanctifying grace is substantially the privilege which Adam lost for us, and which is now given back to us by Jesus Christ. It is the supernatural state, the higher life and the source of the higher activities of man. It is that which raises him at once above the material level of the universe, and takes him out of the category of things that belong to the temporal order, and work for the present epoch only. It brings with it new sensibilities and faculties for knowing, understanding and possessing God, for practising

a higher morality and virtues impossible in the natural sphere, for rising to grander ideas and aspirations. We have probably in several respects received more than we had lost. Instead of holding our supernatural life as an appanage of our nature by inheritance from our parents, we now receive it as a personal gift to each directly from God through Jesus Christ. Our spiritual father now is not Adam unfallen, but better still, the Eternal Father Himself. The words of Solomon describe this infusion of grace. "All good things came to me with it, and innumerable riches through its hands. . . . It is an infinite treasure to men. . . . It is a vapour of the power of God and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God. . . . God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom" (Wisd. vii.). Such is the state of all the children of God. How much better than the state of worldliness!

III. Life in the state of sanctifying grace is the highest and noblest thing on earth. A soul in this condition is more beautiful than all the material creation, for it reflects more of the beauty and perfection of God; it is the most useful of all beings, for it does not serve only the purpose of inferior creation, or of man alone, but the highest purposes of God; it is the most wonderful of God's works after the Incarnation, on account of the power and wisdom which are deployed in it; it is a new creation superadded to all the wonders of the material one. All the spiritual machinery of the higher life, all the other graces and gifts of God, are either means and preparations for sanctifying grace or consequences that flow from it. This great gift is within the reach of all. It is far superior to all the advantages of possession, or knowledge, or position that a man can gain during his course on earth. Thus God deals equally with all men; and their different lots are substantially the same. The highest gift is equally for all; and inequalities of fortune, length of life, pleasure, etc., are mere grains that do not disturb the level of the balance.

12.—GRACE AND THE SONSHIP OF GOD.

I. "Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. ciii. 30). The sanctification of men is really a new creation, and a renewal of the face of the earth by covering it with a new order of life and action. The work of sanctification by the effusion of grace resembles more the generation of the Eternal Son than the creation of the material world. God sends forth an efflux of His intellect which knows all things, of His will which determines all things, of His love and His sanctity, and produces in man, when properly disposed by the consent of his will, a reflection of His own divine image. This resemblance is not merely superficial as are the vestiges of God in the material creation, but in some wonderful way the souls of men are "made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). The advantages which are communicated in sanctifying grace resemble the qualities which belong to sonship. We are placed on the same supernatural level of existence as God, we receive an infused life from God, we are most closely united with Him, and share in some manner in His divine nature. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). It is however a sonship not of nature but of adoption. Therefore you should cry Abba, Father. God is no stranger to you, no remote Creator or terrible judge; but He has revealed Himself as your Father, to exalt you and to show what love and service He expects from you.

II. The sonship of God is conferred on us, not immediately by the Father, but through His Son, Jesus Christ. Of ourselves we are absolutely cut off from all supernatural communication with God, and from all means of re-establishing it; but the Son of God who is also Son of Man has brought God and man again into union. God the Son has joined Himself to man in community of nature; there is

also a personal union of the divinity and humanity in Him. Something more, however, is required; each individual has to be brought into union with Jesus Christ, in a manner more intimate than by physical brotherhood in the same human species, and this requirement is fulfilled by sanctifying grace. The Incarnation made God the Son like to us, sanctifying grace makes us like to Him. We meet Him in the community of natural and supernatural life, so as to be able to say: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). We are brought to the highest level of humanity, to the level of its first-born and predominant member; and then the final stage of the evolution of man on earth is reached. These things are not figures of speech or exaggerations; they are literal reality. What happiness it is to possess these advantages and be conscious of them in your faith and religion!

III. The sonship of God by sanctifying grace involves other privileges. "If sons, heirs also" (Rom. viii. 17). As adopted brethren of Jesus Christ we acquire a participation in His rights merited by Him as man; and the chief one is the right to the kingdom of heaven. St. Paul describes another aspect of this state of grace. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God abideth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). And not only the Holy Ghost but the three Divine Persons dwell in the soul that possesses grace: "If any man love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). And again: "He that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). How great is the dignity of the supernatural state, and how great the obligation to maintain the sanctity of the condition to which God has raised us! St. Paul shows us the true inference from these facts: "You are not your own; for you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

13.—THE EFFECTS OF SANCTIFYING GRACE.

I. The first effect of sanctifying grace is the justification of the sinner. Justification and sanctification are different aspects of the same operation. They involve one another and are inseparable. Justification is the removal of sins. God does not simply ignore, or overlook, or cover them up; He really removes them, and makes us actually just. "As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our iniquities from us" (Ps. cii. 12). Yet some of the consequences of sin remain with us during this life, and even beyond it for a period. As soon as sin is banished God enters, and the soul is sanctified. This effect of justification and sanctification does not proceed from our repentance and good works as a cause; mere sorrow for our crimes and follies cannot undo them. Repentance is indeed a condition which enables God to work in us, but the true cause of our justification is the action of God which places our souls in a new condition called the state of habitual or sanctifying grace. This action, which destroys the virulent activity of sin in our souls is supernatural and beyond all our power of attainment by ourselves. Grace and sin are incompatible. As the state of grace is justification from sin, so one mortal sin expels habitual grace, destroys the higher life, and leaves the soul in a state of miserable ruin cut off from all participation in God. Give "thanks to God the Father . . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. i. 12, 13). Let sin never approach your soul to ruin the marvellous work of God therein.

II. A second consequence of the state of grace, after the removal of obstacles to the divine operations, is the renewal of the interior man. "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 23, 24). The state of habitual grace is the state of a new life; and this life expresses itself in a number of new activities. The

higher vital operations include the "habits" of certain virtues, or the facility or power of practising them. Thus there is conveyed an aptitude for assimilating divine truths which are beyond the natural grasp of the intelligence, for entering into familar intercourse with the invisible Godhead, believing in His presence, and adhering to Him with all the force of the will and affections. The "habit" of Charity is the source of obedience, is manifested by our careful observance of the divine law, and so is the summary of all the virtues; it is spoken of in terms that make it almost identical with sanctifying grace. There is also an infusion of the "habits" of the Cardinal Virtues, and of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Take care that the state of grace fructify in you with all those germs of usefulness and beauty, as the spring-time covers the earth with new verdure and vigour.

III. Sanctifying grace is further the "Root of Glory." It is the immediate preparation of the soul for heaven; in fact it is the same life under different external conditions. The words "eternal life" and "kingdom of heaven" are applied by Our Lord to the just in this world as well as in the future one. The state of grace here is the commencement and foretaste of the life of glory; and that future state is only the continuance and completion of what is begun here by grace. Our work in this world is to adapt ourselves beforehand to the environment of the heavenly existence, to fit ourselves to breathe its air, and see by its light, and nourish ourselves with the waters of life. Those who are found to have possessed themselves of the supernatural life during their course on earth will enjoy it in its developed form for all eternity; those who are outside the state of grace at the moment of death will pass into the developed state of sin and remain in it for ever. The degree of our glory in heaven will be in exact proportion to the degree of our habitual grace on earth. It is literally true now that the "Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 21). See that it remain so always.

14.—MERIT.

I. By the merit of a good action is meant the claim to an adequate reward which it establishes. The reward we are considering is one that is supernatural in this world and more especially in the next. A meritorious action is one that in some way deserves a reward. There is also a merit of satisfaction, which proceeds from good works and sufferings; this means an adequate compensation which is offered to God and which satisfies for sins. Allied to these is the merit or power of impetration, which is the power of obtaining favours from God by virtue of the value belonging to the prayers offered to Him. There is a great fitness in the doctrine of merit. All forces must produce corresponding results. Our evil actions have a lasting effect, so too must good ones. A supernatural force brought into play must have a supernatural effect. This supernatural power of meriting, satisfying and impetrating does not properly belong to our actions, but has been accorded to us by God in pursuance of the wonderful designs of His Providence, "that every one may receive the proper things of his body according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Cor. v. 10). Thus the demerits of humanity are equitably balanced by their merits, and good prevails over evil. We should be stimulated to work earnestly, knowing that every action will have its eternal supernatural effect.

II. The privilege of meriting comes to us with sanctifying grace. One of our great deficiencies is that by ourselves we are absolutely unable to merit anything supernatural from God. Our natural activity works in this mundane sphere, and cannot produce effects of a higher character than itself. The compensating perfection in Our Blessed Lord is His power of meriting. He alone can pay the sufficient price for the supernatural; His works alone

merit a supernatural recompense; He alone can impetrate favours from God and make satisfaction for sin. By sanctifying grace we are brought into supernatural corporate union with Our Lord, we are in His likeness, His rights become ours, our actions and prayers are united with His actions and receive a certain participation in their value and their efficiency. Jesus merits and satisfies and impetrates of Himself; we do the same through our fellowship with Him. "I am the vine, you the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (John xv. 5). Unite all your acts and intentions with those of Jesus Christ. This is the philosopher's stone which is able to change our dross into purest gold.

III. A man is said to merit a *congruous* reward when this is not due to him by equity or by promise, but is bestowed out of mere benevolence and generosity. A *condign* reward is that which is merited as the just recompense for service rendered. God in His mercy, on account of the perfect and *condign* merit of His only Son, has bound Himself by promise to bestow on us for Christ's sake rewards here and hereafter proportioned to our service. In virtue of these two things we, unworthy as we are, acquire a positive claim and right to a recompense, and become able really to merit from God. This is confirmed by Scripture. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Cor. iii. 8). "God is not unjust that He should forget your work and the love which you have shown in His name" (Heb. vi. 10). And again: "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water . . . amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42). How generous of the Almighty actually to make Himself our debtor, as if He were under an obligation to us. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58).

15.—THE CONDITIONS OF MERIT.

I. In order that men may be able to merit a condign reward from God by their good works, several conditions are necessary. The first condition is on the part of God. It is necessary that He should have given us a claim upon Himself by promising a reward for good deeds. The Almighty Lord of all has no duties towards His creatures, no obligations of any sort towards us, except such as He has Himself created. Our claim to a reward does not rest on the excellence of our works even when done in a state of grace, nor on their value to God, nor on our good intentions, but solely on the divine promise. Without such a promise the infinite generosity of God would undoubtedly recompense a thousand-fold any service done to Him, as He rewarded the humanity of the Egyptian midwives (Exod. i. 20), and the service done by Nabuchodonosor (Ez. xxix. 18-20). This is indeed fitting or congruous, or harmonious with the infinite goodness of God and with the universal law of His Providence as seen in nature, that every cause should have its proper effect. Scripture speaks of the rewards of God as His promises. "Do not lose your confidence, which hath a great reward. For patience is necessary for you, that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. x. 35, 36). It is encouraging to know that every good act will meet with its reward; such is the promise of God, and it will not fail. "I know whom I have believed and I am certain" (2 Tim. i. 12). Therefore you may so run and so fight, not as at an uncertainty or as one beating the air (1 Cor. ix. 15), but with a most definite result.

II. The conditions of merit on the part of man are two. 1. Merit is limited to the time of his probation on earth. When this is over the tree has fallen to the North or the South, and there it will lie for ever. "The night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4). As the parable of the ten virgins teaches us, we must make due provision before the bridegroom arrives at the moment of death.

After that, the elect can earn no further reward, the wicked can no more make atonement, and the desires and sufferings of the souls in Purgatory are not, strictly speaking, meritorious. 2. In order to merit in the supernatural order the soul must be in the state of grace, living with the supernatural life, and united with Our Lord, through whom men merit. Without this grace, and faith which is its basis, all actions, however good of their kind, are of the natural order, and are dead works as far as the supernatural is concerned. Hence St. Paul says that, "though a man should have all knowledge, and the faith that moves mountains, and extremest self-devotion, yet if he be without charity, or the state of grace, he profiteth nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3). Make the most of your present opportunities, do not trust to the uncertain future; time is short and very precious.

III. There are certain conditions of our works themselves which are necessary in order that these be meritorious. 1. Only our conscious deliberate actions are of any avail; mere physical motions are not "human acts," or supernatural. 2. The actions must be positively good ones; but those which have no definite moral or spiritual character may become good actions, and even supernatural, under the influence of our intention. 3. The actions must proceed from an impulse of divine grace; that is, God must work them in us. 4. The motive force in man from which these actions proceed must also be supernatural. If the motive be some merely natural one which does not take account of God, it does not suffice for supernatural meritoriousness. Our intention must be directed in some way, explicitly or implicitly, towards Him. Therefore, whatever you do, do it all in the name of God, and for His sake alone, and not in the name of the world, or of pleasure, or of passion, or of nature. "Take heed that you do not your justice before men that you may be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 1).

16.—THE DEGREES OF MERIT.

I. As sanctifying grace is the source, so it is to a great extent the measure of merit. The diversities of this grace constitute the real differences between men, and arrange them into classes and hierarchies like the angels. A more complete habitual state of grace gives a so much greater spiritual intensity and value to the works arising from it. Two persons doing precisely the same act may have a very different merit for it. So too it is in another sphere: the day's work of a highly cultivated man is more highly recompensed than the physical toil of the labourer. Thus again the smallest action of the Saviour was more meritorious than all the virtues, and efforts, and heroism of the whole human race together. Hence the greatness of the Blessed Virgin's merits beyond all others, though she was not called to the active or suffering life of Apostles and Martyrs. Hence it is that the saints of God enjoy a greater power of impetration and satisfaction by prayers and sufferings than ordinary Christians. This was the case with Mary Magdalene: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47). As the value of human works is greater here, so is their reward more glorious hereafter; everything is higher and better with the greater abundance of sanctifying grace. "To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound" (Matt. xxv. 29). Esteem the value of actions, not according to the natural ability or energy in them, nor even solely according to the good intention from which they proceed, but primarily according to the sanctifying grace or Spirit of God which moves them.

II. The difficulty that attends good works increases their merit very largely, and also their reward. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Cor. iii. 8). And again it is written: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy consolations have given joy to my soul" (Ps. xciii. 19). The widow's mite was, in God's sight, a greater offering than all the large contributions of Pharisees and Princes of the people; it bore a larger

proportion to her means, and involved a greater amount of sacrifice. The long duration of a good work or of a struggle is also an augmentation of meritoriousness; so God often delays answering our prayers for relief. The long monotony, the apparent hopelessness, the weary waiting, the fight against our own fickleness, exercise the great virtues of trust in God, courage and perseverance, and they multiply the ultimate reward. So also the conflict with distractions and temptations in prayer is more profitable to the soul and pleasing to God than the delights of peaceful contemplation. Hence learn the advantage of persecutions to the Church, of the calumnies that obstruct her work, and of the unceasing difficulties created by human passion both without and within her boundaries. The virtues elicited by tribulation are more glorious and more useful than a series of splendid successes that have cost neither blood nor tears. As difficulties grow worse "rejoice and be exceeding glad, because your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 12).

III. A great deal of course depends also on the intrinsic character of the works done. There are those who exhaust themselves with the multitude of their works and yet find them all unprofitable when they stand before God for judgment. "We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing" (Luke v. 5). That which is considered most meritorious and useful by men is not of necessity considered most meritorious and useful by God. Those virtues which regard God immediately are better than such as serve Him indirectly. Actions which exercise our faith, hope, love of God, love of our neighbours and our religious sense are better than acts of other virtues; spiritual activity is better than any in the temporal order, the interests of souls are more than the comforts of the body, advancement in the knowledge of God and the practice of morality is more than gold-mines and gigantic businesses; the lowest grade of supernatural virtue surpasses the most brilliant natural virtues. Always do what is highest, and elevate lowly duties by doing them for God.

17.—THE OBJECTS OF MERIT.

I. Consider to what class of objects human merit extends; and first the limitations of the power of meriting. 1. The first action of God on the soul unjustified or in the state of mortal sin cannot be merited either by that soul's own action or by the action of any other human being interceding or offering his own merits. And when the sinner corresponds to that first grace and begins to turn towards God, he does not thereby merit justification and sanctifying grace. It is only when this grace has been infused that the soul is able to merit through union with Christ and the possession of the promises. Till then we are simply vessels of mercy and not of merit. 2. Another thing that is not to be merited is the last step in the path of salvation, the most necessary of all, our final perseverance in grace; for this includes a number of special aids from God that have not been guaranteed, and are beyond our due claims. Salvation is uncertain to the last, and remains the free gift of God and the absolute work of grace. Thus the beginning and the ending are entirely in the hands of Our Lord and are in no sense due to us. "There is a remnant saved according to the election of grace. And if by grace it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Rom. xi. 5, 6). Therefore the Prophet says: "All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without any price" (Isa. lv. 1). See how thoroughly you are in the hand of God from first to last. Ask Him to watch over your coming in and your going out.

II. The human soul, however, is not a dead mass of earth in the hands of the Creator, it is a free agent, it must act with Him and contribute in some measure to the work of its salvation. Its efforts are not futile; it will have the glory of having earned its reward, while to God is the full glory of bestowing it. 1. Man can merit an increase of sanctifying grace. He can purge himself more and more

from sin, he may become justified and sanctified still more (Apoc. xxii. 11). As he advances in holiness, he receives more actual graces from God, which call him to further deeds of holiness and higher favour. 2. Man can also strictly speaking merit glory and the increase of it. Scripture frequently speaks of eternal happiness as a prize to be striven for or a reward for faithful service. Glory is the continuance of the state of sanctification into the next world; the first step is strictly beyond our powers of meriting; but, having commenced, we can merit both our advance in grace and the degrees of glory that correspond to it in heaven. As every force in the universe is conserved and works its effects for ever in transmuted forms, so every energy that you put forth in virtuous acts will remain as an eternal source of glory to God and of happiness to you.

III. We can by no means merit the whole of what we shall possess in heaven. God's generosity is beyond all our deserts; we render Him an insignificant service, and He rewards us with the enjoyment of the Infinite. Here on earth God grants to our prayers much more than their strict merit of impetration deserves. How miserable are our few prayers; yet it is said: "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Matt. vii. 8). We cannot merit salvation for another; yet the Apostle says: "Pray for one another that you may be saved: for the continual prayer of the just man availeth much" (Jas. v. 16). We cannot merit final perseverance, yet it will certainly be granted if we pray constantly and strive for it. We have no claim to earthly rewards, yet favours of this kind exceeding the powers of nature are frequently granted, to encourage our faith and move us to a more affectionate and filial confidence in God. Thank God for granting such efficacy and merit to your prayers and works, and giving them an intrinsic value beyond what is natural to them. Avail yourself fully of His bounty.

18.—OPPORTUNITIES OF MERIT.

I. Consider what abundant opportunities God has bestowed on men of meriting, of advancing in holiness, and increasing their meed of future glory. In every period, place and condition of life men can merit. If each position has its special difficulties, it has also its peculiar opportunities. God places a person in a certain state of life, and He accords such light and strength as that state requires. In the world as well as in the cloister, in prisons and in royal courts, in the lecture-room and in the labourer's cottage, amid the corruptions of Babylon as in the temple courts, men and women have sanctified themselves and won the position of saints. Meritorious service is not limited to the strong and well-endowed, or to the period of maturity and vigour. Children and the aged, the bed-ridden and the silent toiler in obscurity can do the work of God in their own souls and in the world, and can earn the highest degree of reward by the meritoriousness of their daily duties and the fervour of their good-will. The power of meriting, of atoning, of impetrating, is exercised more fully perhaps by those who can only suffer and pray than by those who are gifted with brilliant energies for external action. Never think that the accidents of time or place or employment can prevent you from serving God and advancing in merit. They may obstruct some particular forms of well-doing, but they afford other opportunities of greater merit, if you know how to seek them out and employ them.

II. Consider the different ways in which we can merit from God. 1. If we be in the state of sanctifying grace and in an habitual religious frame of mind, all our good actions, even without our special advertence, have a supernatural value and merit. 2. If we form at intervals the intention to "do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31), our most trivial and colourless actions become works of supernatural

merit, glorifying God and sanctifying our souls. 3. The prophet was commended for being "a man of desires." As an evil desire is a sin of the same class as the positive act, so by good desires which we may not be able to carry into effect, we acquire before God the merit of corresponding deeds of benevolence, of religion, of self-sacrifice. 4. Prayer is the great source of energy and spiritual life on earth. Tranquil and sluggish as the carnal-minded consider it to be, it is one of the chief forms of activity. By prayer we are able to advance effectually, and to bear an actual share in the preachings of Apostles, the sufferings of Martyrs, and the multifarious works of priests, religious orders, and the lay soldiers of the Cross. What abundant opportunities you have of meriting grace and glory by the service of God! Do not live thoughtlessly, neglecting and wasting them, but treasure them and use them as the merchant does the smallest chance of gain.

III. Consider the shocking waste of supernatural energy and future prospects. Many remain plunged in mortal sin, dead to Christ, and their works are all unprofitable. Others are incarnations of the spirit of evil, hating God and goodness, trampling on the Precious Blood of Christ, violating every law, natural, moral and spiritual, filling the world with miseries, and heaping up wrath to themselves. Others again resist the light of truth, and will not come up higher whither God calls them; they refuse to render a complete service to God, and fail of their vocation. Others again labour on temporal things, working from the superabundance of their natural energies, pleasing themselves and seeking commendation from men. Others live carelessly from day to day, doing little harm, but troubling nought about spiritual things. To all these the Lord says: "You have sowed much and have brought in little: you have eaten but have not had enough . . . you have clothed yourselves but have not been warmed: and he that earned wages put them into a bag with holes" (Agg. i. 6). Be careful that you do not thus squander your opportunities.

19.—ADVANCE IN SANCTIFICATION.

I. That which man primarily and immediately merits by good works is the increase of sanctifying grace, advance in holiness and favour with God here, and hereafter a corresponding augmentation of glory. While the progress of man in other departments of life is limited by the weakness of his faculties or by external obstacles, in the matter of sanctification he is perfectible to an indefinite extent. As long as life endures, a soul can go on working, praying, suffering, practising divine love, conformity of the will to God's benevolence, faith, humility, in an ever-advancing measure; and as the spiritual standing is raised by each degree of grace, so does every action become more supernaturally valuable. The bounty of God is never exhausted, and He continues to render a thousand-fold, by a new influx of supernatural vitality, for every effort we make in His service. By all this our future deserts are multiplied, our capacity for knowledge, love, and joy in heaven is enlarged, we shall be raised higher in glory, and shall drink more deeply of the torrents of delight. Every day of your life you may advance more and more in sanctification, and lay up to yourself treasures incomprehensibly great, which thieves cannot steal, nor rust and moth eat away. Reflect on the value of holiness and the facilities God has given you for acquiring it. Hunger and thirst after this justice and you will have your fill.

II. Consider how Holy Scripture confirms this doctrine. The aspiration of the just man is set forth: "Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears. . . . The lawgiver shall give a blessing, they shall go from virtue to virtue" (Ps. lxxxiii. 6-8). The advance of the just man depends, after God, on his own efforts: we are bidden to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. iii. 18). And again: "He that is

just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still" (Apoc. xxii. 11). The result is that "the path of the just, like a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even unto perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). The great advantage of long life is that you are able to carry on further this blessed work. There is always something to live for, even when the interests and pleasures of life have passed from us to younger hands. Here too is the great advantage of those who were called by God in childhood and have remained always faithful. They amass merits which those who come at the eleventh hour can only rival by extraordinary fervour, and struggles, and sufferings. The greater difficulties of later comers are happy opportunities of making up for lost years, and being made perfect in a short space fulfilling a long time (Wisd. iv. 13).

III. The advancement of holy souls, however great, never amounts, during this life, to confirmation in grace, and to freedom from the peril of sin and eternal loss. The passions remain vivid, and concupiscence ever tends to draw away even the saints into the way of perdition. The great Apostle with all his labours and his favours from God says: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if by any means I may apprehend. . . . I do not count myself to have apprehended" (Phil. iii. 12, 13). He speaks of his imminent danger, and prays to be saved from it: "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin. . . . Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 23, 24). So he always lived in fear lest, after preaching to others, he himself should become a castaway (1 Cor. ix. 27). One of your greatest dangers is to forget the dangers and allow yourself to be lulled in security, on the strength of past fidelity, and in reliance on your own merits. Consider yourself always as a beginner, as uncertain of the future, as possibly a reprobate.

20.—PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE.

I. As long as we live we can never be certain of retaining God's grace and persevering to the end. We always remain in a state of half light in this world, not only as to God and divine truths, which we do not fully comprehend, but also as to ourselves and our justice. "There are just men and wise men, and their works are in the hand of God; and yet no man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or hatred; but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come" (Eccle. ix. 1, 2). If we are in obscurity as to our present state, still less can we have any certainty as to what the future will bring forth, except by special revelation such as was vouchsafed to the thief on the cross. No one dare say: "My heart is clean, I am pure from sin" (Prov. xx. 9). David recognized that a man may be in grievous sin without knowing it: "Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant" (Ps. xviii. 13, 14). The Holy Ghost goes so far as to say: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven" (Eccli. v. 5). Our own assurance is worth nothing, for the Apostle says: "I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I am not hereby justified. . . . Therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come who will both bring to light the things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5). You can never venture to presume on your safety. Serve God in confidence and hope, but also with fear and trembling.

II. It is an anxious thing for us to reflect that at any moment we may lose the grace of God, and fall into the ranks of His enemies and even perhaps of the reprobate. Sampson fell, and David, and St. Peter; Judas also, and he never repented. St. Paul speaks of those who had been enlightened and yet subsequently made shipwreck of the faith: another of His converts he publicly delivered over to

the dominion of Satan. We have indeed received spiritual life and countless favours from the Lord, "but we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. iv. 7). If we fail, all our past virtues will not merit for us restoration to grace. "The justice of the just shall not deliver him in what day soever he shall sin" (Ez. xxxiii. 12). "If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered; in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin which he hath committed, in them he shall die" (Ez. xviii. 24). The higher you have risen, the more does Satan strive to compass your ruin, the more complete it will be if it comes; the more care therefore you need to exercise. It was to the Apostles that Jesus said: "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

III. Perseverance is the final gift of God. It is needed to crown the work; and all else goes for nothing if we do not secure this great grace. The gift of perseverance involves a multitude of actual graces, aids to well-doing, protection against temptations, the arrangement of a long series of accidents, the approach of death at a suitable moment when we are in the state of grace. Who but God can dispose so many things successfully? We cannot secure this by any foresight; we cannot merit all these graces for ourselves. We need to watch always, to endeavour to be always ready for the coming of the bridegroom, to avoid occasions of sin, to repent at once if unhappily we fall, to be steadfast above all in praying for a happy death, and to secure the intercession of the Holy Virgin, and the Saints, and the living friends of God; and then we may entertain a humble hope of salvation: "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10).

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE XI.

VIRTUE IN GENERAL.

1.—THE NATURE OF VIRTUE.

I. The soul of man is drawn in different directions by impulses of different kinds; every faculty has its tendency to employ itself in action, and every action may be exercised on good and beneficial objects, or perversely and injuriously. These impulses are often contradictory, and in their earlier action generally transient and occasional; but under a combination of causes they tend to acquire a degree of fixity and consistency among themselves. They then become a permanent principle of movement in the soul, always ready to enter into a state of activity; they form a predisposition to a certain course of action, which grows gradually more easy of repetition, and at last becomes spontaneous, or even indeliberate, and sometimes overcomes the will when this has become weakened by continually yielding. These predispositions, however they are formed, are known in theological language as "habits" of the soul. Some of these habits come to us in the course of nature, they proceed from causes antecedent to our birth, as an inheritance from unknown ancestors, and are said to be part of our natural character. At other times they are implanted in the course of education or are formed by our own deliberate efforts. Sometimes they spring up easily and rapidly, or they may be the result of persevering labour. Frequent exercise strengthens them; neglect causes them to grow weaker and even die out. It is necessary to remember that every habit, like every impulse, is not necessarily good. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God" (1 John iv. 1). Be careful of this. Habits form your character, and become an important factor in your salvation or eternal loss.

II. Virtue belongs to the category of habits of the soul. It is a permanent predisposition leading men to act in a way

that is harmonious with the law of their nature, and therefore productive of good. The good of any being is that which corresponds to the true and legitimate demands of its nature as moulded by the hand of God, which helps it to work out its highest development and attain the end of its existence. Virtue in its general sense is a very wide term. It embraces all that is of the perfection of the rational nature. It is a quality resident in the intelligence and will of man, leading him to seek out and adhere to truth and goodness in all their forms, and to subdue all those impulses of the inferior departments of his being which fight against its higher law. Cultivate your soul like a garden full of plants entrusted to you by God. Leave nothing to accident and chance, but watch over every impulse, and either check or foster it as it accords with or departs from the standard of human perfection derived from God's perfection.

III. Virtue according to its etymology signifies force. It does not consist in a lowered vitality, nor in exemption from temptation, nor in any deficiency in the lower elements of human nature, nor in a colourless tranquillity of life. It is the source of the positive energies of good, which must oppose and ultimately prevail over the negative energies of evil. A virtuous life is a life of continual activity and struggle; it must always be a matter of difficulty, and it requires great strength, courage, self-sacrifice and perseverance, beyond all the daring enterprises of natural energy. To lead an easy life without effort or conflict is always to lead an ignoble life, and generally a degraded one. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1). Virtue that has not been tried by difficulties and temptations may be pleasant, but it is wanting in merit and in resemblance to the virtues of Jesus Christ. Remember that glory is not for sluggards: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). Let your virtue be militant and patient.

2.—ACQUIRED AND INFUSED HABITS OF VIRTUE.

I. Man begins his course devoid of all virtues, and unable for a long time to act consciously and responsibly. The soul is a blank canvas which is to receive its character at a later date from habits of different kinds and the actions accompanying them, from the virtues and vices and the acts of virtue and of vice. There is a preliminary distinction of virtues into intellectual and moral, corresponding to the two master faculties of our nature, the intelligence and the will. They have regard respectively to the cognisance of truth, or to the guidance of our affections and external actions. The intellectual virtues are rather of an abstract kind, the moral are practical; yet these two are closely connected in many ways. Reasoning, whether true or false, precedes the action and conduces to forming its determinate moral character. The moral sense, such as it is, good or perverted, often influences the apprehensions and judgments of the intellect. Purely intellectual vices free from moral culpability are yet an evil tree, which will bring forth evil fruit in the long run. Ignorance, prejudice, speculative error, defects of wisdom, prudence, sagacity, science, have injurious and very far-reaching effects on the moral life. Ideas are very different from actions, and are not always in correspondence with them; they seem to be intangible and confined to the speculative sphere, but ultimately they work themselves out into practical results. Do not underrate the importance of intellectual virtues, of full knowledge, unbiased decisions, honest facing of difficulties, readiness to acknowledge mistakes, fairness towards opponents, confidence in truth that it can do no harm.

II. Habits of virtue considered as to their origin are divided into acquired and infused. An acquired habit is the

facility which comes from repeated actions whether in the natural or the supernatural order. Such habits come to us in different ways, either as the acquirements of our own efforts, or by natural character, by the example of others, by education or the influence of opinion. Acquired habits of natural virtue do not depend on grace or even on faith. They are good in themselves, useful to the progress of the individual and of the world, and they will not fail to have their reward in the lower sphere of nature. St. Augustine however teaches that they are almost invariably imperfect, or even corrupted by some admixture of evil. The qualities esteemed as high virtues by the carnal-minded are very often nothing more than brilliant or daring vices. Do not despise natural virtues. The natural is the basis of the supernatural. Supernatural virtue, though it has substantial integrity, is yet seriously disfigured if accompanied by any notable deficiency in the natural virtues. Grace will help you to acquire the natural virtues and make them perfect by the addition of the supernatural element.

III. The infused or supernatural habits of virtue are communicated to us by God with sanctifying grace. They lead us to act upon the principles revealed to the reason by faith, and to seek in our actions a supernatural object, *viz.* God and eternal life. The predisposition or habit of these virtues includes special impulses of aid from God in practising them. Our natural propensities are not extinguished or even weakened by the infusion of these virtues, difficulties and temptations are not taken out of our way, the service of God is not made easy; but we receive the power of doing our actions on the supernatural level, with the assistance of supernatural graces of action, and the prospect of a supernatural reward. It is your duty to use the potential facilities which God thus gives you and to develop them by constant practice into actual facilities, and to acquire the custom of doing good in such a way that it will become a habit or second nature.

3.—INFUSED HABITS IN PARTICULAR.

I. Mankind are moved to action and guided in it by reason, which proceeds by the way of knowledge and judgment; also by faith which furnishes a totally new knowledge and illumination; and thirdly, by the Holy Ghost, who further inspires good thoughts, and affords direction and strength to carry them into effect. The movements of the Holy Spirit act immediately on the two master faculties, the intelligence and the will. God adapts these faculties so that they may correspond to the influence from without; and He confers on them spiritual aids, which are distinguished in Holy Scripture and in our estimation according to the different operations of our minds when so inspired. The Prophet enumerates seven species of infused grace which are attributed to the Holy Ghost as His gifts. These are "the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and . . . the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. xi. 2, 3). They are the peculiar endowments of the Messias; and, on account of our participation in Him and in His Spirit, these same gifts become part of our inheritance also. These represent the graces which guide the intellect both as speculative and as practical, and they aid the will as to the accomplishment of its duties—courage under difficulties, and resistance to temptation. Such are some of the favours accorded to the faithful soul; they are manifested especially in the saints, but also in every one who maintains himself in the grace of God.

II. There is another class of virtues which are rather general conditions under which all the more specialized virtues must be exercised if they are to be perfect. These are the Cardinal virtues, on which all the others turn; they stand first in order of the moral virtues on account of their universal application, and they follow immediately after the theological virtues. They are mentioned in Holy Scripture.

Wisdom, it says, "teaches Temperance, and Prudence, and Justice, and Fortitude, which are such things as that men can have nothing more profitable in life" (Wisd. viii. 7). They are necessary virtues of the natural order as well, and at times may be developed in an eminent degree; but for their full and general efficiency, even in the natural order, they need to be supplemented by supernatural considerations, and supported by a supernatural influx from God. Still more do they require this when they deal with that series of objects which concern our salvation. In this regard the prudence and the justice of this world are not merely insufficient but generally misleading; for different measures and different principles have to be applied in the two spheres. Hence the impossibility of the carnal mind understanding the things of the Spirit. You have received from God something more than all the world can give.

III. Those who have accepted the spiritual call of God are brought into immediate relations with Him of knowledge, trust and expectation, and union of love. To render them capable of this, God infuses into them the highest set of predisposing qualities, the habits of the Theological Virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity. The other virtues are concerned with the means of reaching God, these are concerned with the apprehension of God Himself. The material on which the other infused virtues are employed is found in the natural order; the object of these is known to us by revelation only, it is the body of recondite truths connected with the supreme uncreated Being. The Theological Virtues, therefore, are the means by which human faculties are raised to their highest expression, and employed on the noblest object. By them we know of truths that are beyond human discovery; we are enabled to aspire to happiness and glory beyond all in this world; and the faculty of love is exalted into adhesion to, and enjoyment of transcendent and infinite life. The effects of these will abide when all else has passed away. Ask God for an abundance of these great gifts.

4.—THE MOTIVES OF VIRTUE.

I. The practice of virtue generally is most desirable on account of its intrinsic advantages. 1. For its utility. Everything good is profitable in its effects. A life of virtue leads men to the possession of the Supreme Good, *i.e.* God, and eternal happiness. It secures them the favour and protection of God, antidotes to almost all evils, a peaceable life and a holy death. Virtue is absolutely necessary for the existence and prosperity of the social system; without it a community cannot devise good laws or administer them profitably, or secure to each his rights. "All good things came to me with her, and innumerable riches through her hands" (Wisd. vii. 11). 2. It promotes happiness. The pleasures of a virtuous life are the highest, for their purity, their loftiness, their wholesomeness, their permanence: nothing equals the happiness of a good conscience. 3. Virtue is honourable. Although the following of Christ brings persecution and calumny, it is nevertheless true that "Thy friends, O Lord, are made exceedingly honourable" (Ps. cxxxviii. 17). Virtue, though it be neglected and even persecuted, yet always commands respect. Nought else possesses such advantages. The utilities, the pleasures, the honours that are sought for without regard to virtue are transient, deceptive, unreal, injurious rather than beneficial, they never satisfy expectations, but lead to bitter disappointment and failure. Never allow yourself to be led from the path of rectitude by any promise of advantage however alluring. It is always a bad bargain to sell Christ and one's conscience for thirty pieces of silver.

II. While we are permitted to take account of these advantages, we must not dwell exclusively on the present benefits that accompany virtue. This would be making creatures and self the object of our actions. God should always be our final object, and more especially in those actions which He inspires, and which of their own nature lead us towards Him. The thought of God is the highest

and the most efficient of all motives. Nothing less than this will suffice us in the long and arduous struggle after holiness. There are many who restrain themselves and do good actions for the resultant benefits, for the sake of comfort, health, or esteem, out of human respect, or on account of prevailing fashion, or for fear of consequences. Such virtue is highly esteemed in the world; but it is simply the appearance of virtue, it is a more refined form of selfishness, it is a beating of the air, and leaves no results of merit and eternal reward behind. You must endeavour not only to do the actions which God has imposed on you as the law of your well-being, but you should do them for the sake of God, for the advancement of His glory, and because they are His will. Do not turn them into a service of fashion, of the world, of self. "I am not troubled following Thee for my pastor; and I have not desired the day of man, Thou knowest" (Jer. xvii. 16).

III. Even in those actions which are perfectly good in themselves, and which belong to the direct service of God or our neighbour, there is always danger that self may intrude and become at least their partial motive. "Why have we fasted, and Thou hast not regarded? . . . Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found" (Isa. lviii. 3). The application of some unexpected test often shows that even in acts of religion, of self-sacrifice, of benevolence to others, we have sought self in reality and not God. Actions started with high aims often descend gradually from that elevation, and return towards the earth instead of mounting to the throne of God. It is necessary to keep a careful watch on the good we do, and analyze our motives occasionally, lest it turn out that we have been following our own will instead of God's, or that our zeal has been a mere ebullition of natural energy, or that vanity and obstinacy have been our sustaining force rather than grace. In all acts of virtue renounce mentally all the pleasure and profit thence arising, and offer all to God.

5.—THE PROGRESS OF VIRTUE.

I. The beginnings of the infused habits of the moral and theological virtues are not from our own strivings but from God. They come to us with the infusion of sanctifying grace. This grace is bestowed on us by God through the Sacraments; or, in default of the Sacraments, it is given to us by God's free bounty in response to our turning towards Him with acts of charity and repentance of our sins. We then receive the faculty of eliciting actions of every kind on the supernatural level. Our souls are enriched with new endowments, *viz.* the powers and facilities for all the virtues; and this makes them beautiful in the sight of God as presenting more fully the image of His perfections. The acquired habits of virtue are established in our souls as we gain the knowledge of them, become familiarized with them, learn to esteem and desire them, and finally put them into frequent practice. The infused and acquired habits must be united. We must not be contented with the mere potentiality of exercising faith or justice on the supernatural plane; we must bring that potentiality into effect as occasion offers, and repeat the actions of faith or justice, exercising our natural faculties until they are moulded to the forms of virtue as by a second nature. The infused habit, or supernatural potentiality, must take shape in the acquired habit of action, to bring forth fruit and prove its vitality. Without that infusion from God, the habit of action, of belief or of justice, *e.g.*, is only of the natural order and is dead as regards the higher life.

II. The habits of virtues, both the infused and the acquired, are capable of being developed in us; and it is an important part of our duty on earth to advance from virtue to virtue until we see the God of Gods in Sion. The progress in each kind of habit corresponds to the process by which it was originated. The infused habits of virtue are

bestowed by God in union with sanctifying grace, and they vary with it. Every prayer or other act of virtue beautifies the soul with a new accession of sanctifying grace; and in equal measure that principle acts in greater intensity within us which gives the supernatural quality to our good deeds, and originates Faith, Hope, Charity and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The habit of action, or the acquired facility of deeds of virtue, is increased by the continual repetition of those acts, until we arrive at the practice of the most difficult virtues, and until those things which to the natural man are impossible become the common-places of our lives. The habit of action is our daily currency, the infused supernatural habit is our capital; the constant overturn of habitual acts increases the permanent habit which stands behind them and gives them their supernatural value. Pray God that you may always advance on this double line.

III. If we do not advance we fall back. Our habits of virtue are under a liability to diminution and entire destruction. The infused habits of virtue are radically destroyed by the loss of sanctifying grace through the commission of one mortal sin. The acquired habit of action does not however perish. Our belief, for instance, in divine mysteries may be as firmly rooted in us as before the act of sin, but it is no longer living supernatural faith, it is simply the momentum which still survives in our natural faculties from the accumulated acts of faith that went before. In course of time however the absence of sanctifying grace and the infused supernatural habit tells upon the acquired habits of action. Graces of action are diminished, and good actions themselves first lose their supernatural quality, and then perhaps the natural facility for their repetition; they first become spiritually dead, and then die out as actions, from disuse and from repeated falls into the sins that are opposed to them. Beware of any weakening of either class of habits; and do not trust to the sufficiency of one alone if the other be deficient.

6.—THE CONSIDERATION OF VIRTUE.

I. The operation of the intelligence must precede that of the will. We must carefully study principles and methods before we proceed to practical applications. In every branch of activity men need to be educated beforehand as to its laws in all their details. Serious consideration must be systematic and not at haphazard. A superficial acquaintance with formulas is not sufficient; it is necessary to impress the mind, and stir up interest and enthusiasm. Such is the case with the education of the soul to virtue. We should know what exactly is the nature of virtue, the means of practising it, the obstacles which stand in its way, the vices opposed to it; and we should be acquainted with the great model of all virtue in the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the lives of His followers who have made the divine Ideal the measure of ordinary lives. "Blessed is he that understandeth." Without such careful training of the mind we shall run the risk of mistaking our course, of overlooking some important virtue, of carefully cultivating a weed instead of a flower, and a vice instead of the divine reality. In any case our efforts will be indefinite, unpractical, and without result. Take care that you do not lead a random life, drifting hither and thither without any definite aim, forgetting your deficiencies, neglecting systematic self-conquest, taking ignorance as an all-sufficient guide. Investigate the whole field of virtue, consider your own needs, and proceed systematically, as in learning a business or educating a child.

II. It is necessary, secondly, to consider carefully our own dispositions, opportunities and duties. "Know thyself" was a maxim of the ancient sages. We should scrutinize our habits and actions, ascertain our predominant vice, as well the predominant gift which should be the chief instrument of labour in God's service, and penetrate through

the veil of self-deception which hides us from our own eyes, and makes us seem so different to ourselves from what we seem to others. We must consider the special circumstances of our particular state of life with its peculiar duties; we must see what virtues befit us, and be guided in their attainment by divine and human prudence. A thing that is good is not on that account good for all states of life: each state has its own perfection, which is not the same for others. We may fall into serious error while practising actual virtue, and may do more harm by aspiring too high in proportion to our grace than by falling below our vocation. How difficult is this way, where you have to beware of perils not only from your bad intentions but even from your good ones! Watch and pray; examine your conscience frequently, and with severity and absolute sincerity. Beseech God to pour forth His light and illumine the hidden recesses of your soul.

III. We must not rely exclusively on our own resources, but avail ourselves of the accumulated wisdom of holy men, as embodied in spiritual literature, and in those who have been called by God to the direction of souls. We must devote much care to the selection of both the living and the literary guide; and having done our best and solicited the divine assistance, we should esteem their teaching as the word of God. Spiritual reading and systematic meditation are of absolute necessity in order to keep our minds stored with divine truths, and show us our shortcomings, and teach us what virtues we ought to aspire to, and how we ought to carry them out. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the great reservoir of moral and spiritual knowledge. Our Lord is the model of every virtue, and the example for every class and condition of human life. His words and works should be our meditation by day and night. Avail yourself of every opportunity of studying virtue—the example and conversation of others, meditation, reading, and the guidance of your spiritual director.

7.—THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

I. As virtue is the reduction of supernatural principles to action, as it is the practical form that our service of God must take and the instrumental means of our salvation, its acquirement should be one of the great cares of our life. It is the height of folly to attend to trivial advantages, and neglect those that are solid and permanent; to interest ourselves in the business of others and forget our own; to decorate the exterior of a house with profusion, and leave it uncomfortable and unhealthy within; to clothe ourselves in purple, while starving ourselves and shortening our lives. So it is with those who satisfy all the cravings of the body, who develop all the faculties of the intelligence, and neglect the nobler impulses to virtue which spring from grace. It is the supreme folly, to make every provision for the brief period of this life and none whatever for that existence which will last for ever. There are many who have the fullest knowledge and every assistance, and yet do not bring forth fruits of virtue; they suffer the temporal disadvantages that belong to the followers of the Crucified, and yet enjoy none of their spiritual compensations. "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith but hath not works?" (Jas. ii. 14). Take care to crown the edifice of faith and grace by leading a life of virtue. Each day brings its openings for works of faith, of benevolence, of self-restraint. Do not neglect a single one.

II. The first and principal theatre for the exercise of virtue is within man's own soul. There it begins, thence it goes forth in overt action. There must be a root to the tree; it is hidden beneath the soil; from that invisible source proceed the trunk, the branches, the life, the fruit of the tree. The casual good deed which is not generated by principle, but by expediency or by a sudden whim, is not an act of virtue. It may deceive the eye of man, but not universally nor for any length of time. It is an isolated

phenomenon, dead and unproductive, without ancestry or progeny ; it is not supported by the general tenor of life nor by its consistency with all other actions. Such virtue is a fraud, an unreality, it withers and fails under the first stress of trial ; it is the virtue of the Pharisees, a mockery of God and man. The inner life of the soul is the true human life ; the great majority of a man's operations are those of the mind, and their character gives the character to his outward actions. "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within" (Ps. xliv. 14). Endeavour always to be, and not merely to seem virtuous. Cultivate virtue not for its advantages, nor in such kinds as are pleasant and easy to your temperament, but in every one of its forms and for the eye of God alone in the secret of your soul.

III. Virtue must be more than interior. Beginning in the soul, it must, if real and vigorous, take form in external works. True virtue makes itself patent to all men ; although we must not allow ourselves to contemplate this as an object in practising it. We must give good example by our actions, yet we must never do anything for the sake of the good example, but only for God. We have to glorify God publicly by our virtues, and refuse such glory as accrues to us thereby from men. Hence we have two commands: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them" (Matt. vi. 1), and "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). Our Lord gives us an example in His life. It is not enough to have the faith in our hearts unless we profess it openly when the need arises ; nor to indulge feelings of deep devotion and thoughts of heroic effort which never come to anything. Many deceive themselves thus, and take great credit for their good intentions, which only belong to that class of desires which kill the slothful. Take care to be a man of deeds as well as a man of desires. Give effect to every virtuous impulse which rises within you.

8.—THE VICES.

I. Vice is the counterpart of virtue, and has a correspondence of opposition to it as to character, progress and result. Like virtue, vice is not an action, nor a series of actions, but is a permanent quality or habit of the soul predisposing it to certain classes of sins. The act of sin passes at once, the habit of the sin or the vice remains, as a facility for further sins, a source of them, and a delight in them. A virtue is a permanent resemblance to some particular perfection of God; a vice is a permanent state of departure from some divine perfection. As vices increase, there is a further obliteration of the image of God in many different respects, and a growing hideousness of the soul that turns it into a blasphemous caricature of the All-holy and All-beautiful. The vices, as being opposed to God, who is the ideal of perfection, are also opposed to human nature and human reason. They are diseases of the soul, which disorganize the faculties, curtail freedom, bind the soul in a degrading slavery, drain away its strength, destroy spiritual vision and the savour for spiritual things, render the soul incapable of understanding, enjoying, desiring God and the things that are of God, both in this world and in the next. Vice endures as the character of the soul after the act of sin has ceased, and after death has removed the opportunities of sin; and the soul remains for ever a hideous object, spoilt for its purpose, loathed by God and loathing Him.

II. Consider the course of vice. It takes its rise in concupiscence, or the general disorder of our inclinations, whereby they are turned to temporal and sensual things. The vices are the specific manifestations of concupiscence in particular forms according to the different natural impulses which have run to excess and disorder. Some vices

appear as it were spontaneously, in consequence of hereditary predisposition resulting from the sins of our ancestors. At other times the moral nature of a child is allowed to run to waste without check, and, like a garden neglected, it produces more weeds than fruits. Or, again, circumstances suggest some act of sin; this is repeated; the habit is formed by indulgence, it becomes inveterate, and the vice becomes almost a part of the nature; thenceforth it is an ever-present danger, a domestic foe that will never be entirely crushed. It may be resisted and kept within bounds, for freedom always remains, and the grace of God is all-powerful, but it continually endeavours to assert itself. It constitutes our predominant passion and ultimately is either the field of our victory and the cause of our reward, or is the ground of condemnation and eternal misery. Do not make the mistake of supposing that the vicious habit is the legitimate energy of nature, and entitled to respect. It has indeed its uses; but these are that it may train us to conflict, and establish us firmly in the contrary virtue.

III. In order to combat the vices of our character we need: 1. Great generosity and ardour in God's service, forgetfulness of self, and readiness to sacrifice present pleasures for the sake of God's will and the future reward. 2. Sternness and rigour towards ourselves, to make us persevere obstinately in a difficult course, and resist feelings of softness and tenderness towards ourselves, and abstain from following that which is most obvious and easy. 3. Cheerfulness and courage that we may not fall into depression at the severity of the struggle, the prospect of its long continuance, and our occasional infidelity to grace. Remember that the vices that are within you, like all things else, are intended to turn to the spiritual profit of the elect; that struggle is the lot of all, and is the condition of the crown; that the time, though it seems long and the end is not in sight, will prove to be short; and that the reward is worth a thousand times our efforts.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE XII.

THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES.

1.—THE NATURE OF FAITH.

I. God having raised man to higher relations with Himself than those which originate in the natural order, an additional influx from God is required, to form the basis of those relations. There must be some manifestation from outside of those divine truths which reason cannot attain to alone. A special aptitude must be infused into the mind that it may be able to assimilate those truths. There must be some provision for perfect certainty about them, so that they may hold their own against human tendency to error, and may prevail over the influences of the lower nature. As supernatural truth is superior in kind to all that belongs to this world, the action of the mind in adhering to it is more important than any other intellectual action. As the operations of the intelligence must precede all responsible action both in temporal and in spiritual matters, the equipment of the intelligence is the first necessity of the higher life. God has provided for these requirements in the revelation He has given us and in the infused gift of Faith. This is the essential foundation of the higher life, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). We cannot acquire it for ourselves; Faith like "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. i. 17). How much does Faith open to you! How it elevates you in mind and soul! It is one of your most precious gifts. Strive for its increase. Beware lest you ever lose it.

II. The divine gift of Faith produces in the soul absolute certainty about matters which are beyond the reach of our natural faculties. It is necessary for our peace of mind, for the consistent regulation of our lives, and for the organization of all mankind into the unity of one body, that the things which pertain to religion and salvation should be placed beyond all doubt, and raised out of the turmoil and constant changes of opinion which beset every natural science. All other beliefs rest on the fallible authority of

our senses and inferences: they are the passing fashions of a day, proved by a few men to their own satisfaction, adopted on their authority by all the rest of their generation, and then reversed by the later discoveries of their successors. Divine truths come to us not as the most modern speculations of the learned, not as the prevailing opinion of men, not as our own personal convictions or whims, but on the authority of God's own word. An assistance is given to our intellect, in the form of the infused grace of Faith, which helps us to receive with the fullest certainty the knowledge which God has revealed. Those truths remain for ever, unchanged in substance, though gradually developed in proportion to progressing theological investigations, which are stimulated by progressing errors. Thank God for giving you in Faith an "anchor of the soul sure and firm" (Heb. vi. 19).

III. Faith while eminently certain is also obscure. It is "the conviction of things that appear not" (Heb. xi. 1). The human mind cannot rise to the full comprehension of divine mysteries even when they are revealed and firmly believed. So the savage is able to use a gun, or work an engine, and yet he cannot enter into the intricate ideas which led to its invention, or the processes of its manufacture. There are great advantages to us in this obscurity. 1. The blessedness of believing consists in the fact that we do not see with absolute clearness (John xx. 29). 2. It is the obscurity of faith which makes it so great a homage to God. We trust His word implicitly, "bringing into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5). 3. The obscurity is an element in the certitude of our Faith, for we know then that we are not resting on our conceit in ourselves, or on our own shallow intelligence which is liable to deception. Life is carried on through faith in what is not evident, through trust in the convictions and honesty of other men. Our spiritual life requires that we place similar confidence in God and His agents.

2.—THE OBJECT OF FAITH.

I. The object of our belief is the body of truths revealed by God. In the main they are things that are outside the natural sphere and unattainable by our ordinary powers. Things that belong to the order of nature may, however, be made known to us by revelation on account of their having some bearing on supernatural truths; but this is quite exceptional. The living Wisdom of God when walking on this earth made no revelation concerning even the most important of natural truths, science, history, economics, industry, art. Of such subjects it is written: "He hath delivered the world to their disputation." "This painful occupation hath God given to the children of men to be exercised therein" (Eccle. iii. 11, i. 13). The primary object of revelation, subserved by all other things, is God Himself, His greatness, His goodness, the ways of His Providence; and secondarily, the mysteries which flow from Him, the Incarnation, the future life, the fall, the Church, the Sacraments, the divine law. These are the most important objects of human knowledge, the most influential on human life, the most satisfying. St. Augustine truly says that he who knows divine truths, though he may know nought else, knows all things; and he who knows all things else and knows not these, knows nothing. Ask God to give you a deep insight into His divine mysteries and a perception of their harmony and beauty, with practical results in your spiritual life. Let them not degenerate into mere words and formulas.

II. The object of Faith is the whole of what God has revealed, no more and no less. The gift of God is adequate for its whole work, to help us to believe not only the great primary truths but all others down to the smallest. None are unimportant, not one can be dispensed with. Each truth of religion has its place and its function in the system. There is a necessary connection, intellectual and spiritual, of each with all the others. If one be rejected, the logical foundations of all the rest will in time prove to be under-

mined. If the individual mind shall deny or deliberately doubt one single article, the divine virtue of faith will be utterly destroyed. The veracity of God is committed to every point of His revelation, and that veracity is impugned by doubt as much as by denial, and equally by rejecting one word of His as by rejecting the whole body of revealed truth. Belief indeed may remain as to other articles, but it is a belief that has its foundation in our own private whims and not in God's authority; it is no longer universal, certain, divine faith. Here also is the word true: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law but offend in one point is become guilty of all" (Jas. ii. 10). Declare to God your firm adhesion to every jot and tittle of His revelation. In every difficulty raised by cavillers say: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!" (John vi. 69).

III. While there is uniformity and identity in the object of our faith, there is also a continual evolution. Not that God reveals further mysteries, for His revelation is closed; but He shows us the same truths in a different and fuller light. The human mind develops a keener penetration and power of understanding. Investigations into nature discover new laws of God's action, which illustrate His workings in the spiritual sphere. Meditation brings out deeper meanings contained in those forms of words which at the same time manifest and shroud divine truths. Every age brings its own corroboration to the truth of revelation. Even heresy and infidelity have their uses as leading to a more minute examination and more definite setting forth of the objects of belief. Our religious knowledge is in a sense more extensive and deeper than that of the ages that have gone before; for our conceptions are less crude and material, and we can better disengage realities from the clothing of figures and metaphors. You are blessed in this; but take care that, while you progress in knowledge of divine mysteries, there be a corresponding evolution in the stability of your faith and in the holiness of your life.

3.—THE MOTIVE OF FAITH.

I. Why do we believe? What motive is strong enough to make us place the evidence of sense and experience in the second place, and feel the firmest certainty about things which we cannot fully comprehend? Faith differs from ordinary knowledge; it rests not on the word of man or our own faculties, but on infinite wisdom which cannot be mistaken, and perfect veracity which cannot deceive us. The integrity of Faith requires a supernatural motive as well as a supernatural object; we need to believe not only what God has revealed, but because He has revealed it. To believe divine truths simply because they please us, or because of human authority, or because they are beautiful or noble or useful, is not divine Faith. The whole structure must be supernatural; and each part must be in harmony with all the others, and with the higher order to which we are to be raised. No motive could be higher and more forcible than the motive on which God has established our faith. We have evidence that He has spoken, we are strengthened to believe His word, and then our conviction of the truths so conveyed to us is absolutely firm and secure; the invisible becomes more real to us than the visible, our interests centre more in heaven than on earth, we live in familiar intercourse with God and the blessed spirits, and we pass our lives on a higher plane that is incomprehensible to those who have not the faith. Strengthen your belief in the supernatural more and more by remembering that God has spoken.

II. The wisdom and the veracity of God are embodied for us in His spoken and written word, in His revelation of divine truths through Scripture and the Church. The method which God has chosen as the vehicle for the objects of our faith should command our most profound and humble assent. He has not elected to speak to each one face to face and make a direct revelation, but He has chosen two definite organs for His messages, and when they speak, each

according to its character, we recognize the voice of God. Hence the Apostle commends the faith and obedience of his converts; "because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God, who worketh in you that have believed" (1 Thess. ii. 13). According to the general dispositions of His Providence, God makes use of human instruments to carry out His purposes Some He has inspired to write, others He has commanded to preach, to lay down the laws of Faith, to guide His followers. In each case He has given us assurance that they speak in His name, with His full authority, and that their words are His infallible words of salvation. Venerate the high dignity of Scripture and the Church. Thank God for the certitude you have in following them, and the saving graces they communicate to you.

III. The voice of God speaks variously to men. Apart from the natural manifestation of God through the world and the creatures that surround us, the revelation of supernatural truths is made in many different ways. To some few God has spoken directly by word of mouth, as to Adam, Abraham, Moses, Solomon. Others He has instructed by figurative visions, such as Moses, Ezechiel, St. John. To many He has sent His angels, as to Abraham, Joshua, Daniel, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. Often He has put His words into the mouth of special human messengers, such as the Prophets and Apostles. The ordinary guidance of the faithful, however, has been committed to a permanent organization representing God on earth, and for this purpose He poured forth His spirit in abundance on the Synagogue of the Old Testament and on the present Christian Church. Above all there has been the manifestation of God in His Only Son Jesus Christ, who has confirmed all the rest of divine revelation. Rely on Him. In the last resort He is the corner-stone, and support, and assurance of our Faith.

4.—THE RULE OF FAITH.

I. We have received the totality of God's revelation and have been enlightened by the infused gift of faith, yet we are not therefore rendered self-sufficing, infallible, and exempt from all danger of error. There is need, further, of a guardian for that revelation and a guide for our belief. Evil besets good at every step; errors intrude themselves into the domain of faith; that which is holiest is liable to be perverted to our destruction. Doctrine goes through a process of development; new cases arise to which it is not easy to apply the old principles; laws need to be explained, extended, modified; on each of these occasions we are in danger of taking a wrong line, and a mistake may have very serious effects. An external authority is required for the administration and maintenance of truth just as much as for its original transmission to us. The individual is not capable of fulfilling these functions for himself; God does not help him to do so when there are delegates duly commissioned for the purpose. The pious eunuch under the influence of grace was reading the Word of God; when asked by St. Philip if he understood, he humbly answered: "How can I unless some one show me?" (Acts viii. 31). The devout centurion, Cornelius, and the destined Apostle of the Gentiles, although enjoying direct revelations from God, were yet directed to submit to appointed men for their instruction in the faith, so "that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Cor. i. 29). No man is a judge in his own case. Self-sufficiency is the worst of all guides. Follow humbly the Church which God has made the judge of faith, lest you become the sport of your own fancies and of Satan.

II. The Word of God's revelation is, like all His mysteries, recondite and obscure. The books of Scripture have had to be examined, collected, certified and given to us. We cannot do this for ourselves; the opinions of men have varied about it; it only remains that we submit ourselves to an authority chosen by ourselves, or to a public world-

wide authority appointed by God. Further, in Scripture "are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures to their destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 16). An authoritative interpreter is needed, for "no prophecy of the Scripture is made by private interpretation" (2 Pet. i. 20). The interpretation of the law belongs to the legislator as much as does the law itself. The written revelation has been outside the reach of the great bulk of mankind; and those who have had access to it have seldom had at once the leisure, the abilities, and the good-will to make out its interpretation. Without the appointed interpreter the divine revelation is an insoluble enigma, there is no check on individual vagaries, and the impossibility of reasonable agreement and certainty must lead to the entire rejection of revealed truth. How happy are you to know the authority which God has appointed!

III. The Word of God further is liable to be counterfeited, misrepresented, misapplied, so as to render apparent support to falsehood and irreligion. Satan, we are told, passes himself off as an angel of light, and his deceptions as divine truths, and many men so accept him, though meaning well themselves. There are false prophets on earth too, who are as industrious as Satan in perverting truth and judgment. "They prophesy falsely to you in My name: and I have not sent them, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxix. 9). Every heresy professes to speak in the name of the Lord, and quotes the words of God in testimony to its errors. Divine truth is misrepresented and calumniated, as it was in the person of Jesus before the Sanhedrim; and is denounced as being a blasphemy against the Most High, or treason against the laws of knowledge, progress, liberty and holiness. These machinations are sufficient to deceive well-nigh even the elect. Our weakness requires the support and guidance of some visible authority qualified to "try the spirits if they be of God" (1 John iv. 1). With this divine aid alone are you guaranteed against deception.

5.—THE INFALLIBLE GUIDE.

I. The divine system of religion is as complete as the system of nature. Everything in it is adapted for its purposes, and every genuine want of humanity is provided for. The perfection of the natural order is a sign that there is perfect provision for our supernatural requirements if we care to look for it. God does not give His children a stone for bread; He does not render His highest gifts nugatory by leaving them incomplete. Religion, like the civil order, is a visible organization of men subject to worldly conditions, and it needs an outward machinery of government. As in the State, a paper constitution, however excellent, is worthless unless connected with a living active organism. Experience has shown that the written word of God, when divorced from the rest of the divine system, speaks with an uncertain sound that conveys contradictory meanings to different minds, and that it has never yet welded men into a solid unity such as Christ declared His kingdom to be. What a mockery is a revelation which no two men understand alike, a legal code which has no judicial court to explain, dispense, enforce it, a kingdom that has no administrative head, a corporate body which has no common idea or joint action! It would not be worthy of Him who said, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John xiv. 18), that He should leave us to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv. 14), and dependent as to our highest interests on the vacillations of human opinions. How great the benefits which God has conveyed to you in the Church!

II. The general plan of the divine governance is the same under the Old and the New Testament; but now its details have been developed, and it has become a universal system. In each case the Rule of faith was vested in a society accredited to teach in God's name—a society organized, one in itself, and speaking through a recognized mouth-piece. Moses commanded (Deut. xvii.) that in all hard and doubtful

matters the people should consult the priests and do according to their word; and that he who was proud and disobedient should die. We find also as an historical fact that the Canon of Scripture was certified by the Great Sanhedrim and not by individual recognition. So now the Christian body is secured against error by a Church to which the Holy Ghost has taught all truth, "The house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). In this "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors . . . for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all meet into the unity of faith" (Eph. iv. 11-13). Say: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever" (Ps. lxxxiii. 5).

III. Consider the qualities required in the religious authority of the New Dispensation. 1. It should be One, as the representative of the One God, as the source of unity making all men into one society, as administering one system which has one aim and object. Such an authority cannot be divided; still less can it reside in different and contradictory institutions. 2. It must be universal, and no longer tribal or national; it must have existed from the beginning and must continue to the end, so as to extend its influence to all mankind. 3. It must be specially equipped by God for its task; it must possess in their fulness the doctrines of truth and holiness, and the assurance of this must be given to men. 4. It must have the faculty of expressing itself definitely by means of an official head or mouth-piece, who can speak for all, and whose authority is recognized by all; and it must be able to determine the conditions under which it speaks officially. 5. It needs the gift of immortality as against decay and death, and infallibility against all error, which is the worst kind of corruption and death. All these Christ has bestowed on His Church. We are safe under the shadow of her wings. "With thee is the fountain of life; and in thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10).

6.—THE MOTIVES OF CREDIBILITY.

I. The truths revealed by God are beyond our grasp and are mysterious to us, so that we cannot fully see their intrinsic cogency. But they have an extrinsic cogency which is enough to justify us in believing them without comprehending. These are called the motives of credibility. The first of these is the personality of Jesus Christ. To those who have not yet the light of faith He is known historically, and He must be recognized as the noblest, holiest and most wonderful of beings; His wisdom and probity were superior to all human sagacity and sincerity; He was the greatest intellectual and moral force ever manifested, permanent and inexhaustible, of undying interest and beauty. Jesus declared Himself to be the Son of God. To make such a claim falsely would be an incredible folly which would before long discredit the claimant; it would be an act of wickedness absolutely inconsistent with the life and death of Jesus and the influence He has exercised for ages. His historically known character proves that His claim is necessarily credible, although it does not elucidate the mystery of that claim or explain the fact. The whole system of Christianity with the antecedent system of the Old Testament centres in Christ and is accredited by His authority. Hold firmly in all difficulties to the Lord Jesus. You can explain all things by Him, and believe the most incomprehensible mysteries on His word. "I am not troubled following Thee for my shepherd" (Jer. xvii. 16).

II. The character of the Christian Church is a further evidence of the divine origin and credibility of the doctrines she teaches. The Church is the most marvellous organization ever seen on earth. She is ancient but not decrepit, immense but not unwieldy, most varied in details but simple and uniform. She is always an object of opposition and detestation, yet her ideas and her worship are proved by their persistence to be a universal requirement of mankind. She may be crushed in some of her manifestations, but she

reappears at once in others. Her enemies pass into oblivion, all arguments against her, however forcible, become antiquated. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" (Isa. liv. 17). Her members consist, not of perfected saints, but of sinners in process of sanctification, full of human tendencies to independence, profane novelties, and deterioration. Scandals therefore must needs come, yet she survives even the cruel injuries of her domestic foes. Her life is a standing miracle, which affords a reason to all men to examine her doctrines and claims; and honest investigation leads infallibly to kindlier thoughts, the extinction of ignorant prejudice, and the recognition of her doctrines as divine. It is your great honour and privilege to be a member of such a Church. Prove yourself to be worthy of it.

III. A further motive for accepting the incomprehensible mysteries of religion is to be found in their general character and effects. They stand together in perfect consistency; and any one that may present difficulties is certified by the others. They exhibit a true, if partial, idea of God, the best explanation of the problems of the universe, and the noblest ideal for human life. They have inspired the most difficult virtues, and especially those which are necessary for our well-being and social progress. The revelation of future hope gives men an object to live for, and prevents that pusillanimity and weariness of life, and sense of disappointment, which lead to the decline of nations. From religious impulse has proceeded that benevolence which alleviates the destructive effects of selfish greeds and lusts. The great ideas of brotherly unity, mutual respect, progress, liberty, authority, the dignity of labour, which are the bases of civilization are corollaries of Christian doctrine. The Christian system may say with its Divine Founder, "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (John x. 38).

7.—BELIEF AND UNBELIEF.

I. Even if the Christian faith were a product of the human mind, and were as tentative and doubtful as the opposite theories, belief would still be better than unbelief, more beneficial in its results, and therefore presumably nearer to the truth. The unbeliever often regrets the past days when he enjoyed peace in believing, and wishes that they could return. No upright believer has ever wished to disbelieve; the corrupt and vicious alone desire to be rid of their faith that they may be free from its restraints and reproaches. The thought of God, of His watchful Providence, His love, and the equity which will one day remedy all the wrongs of life, gives a strength and peacefulness such as unbelief and self-indulgence can never afford. Even the thought of God's rigorous holiness and His vengeance on sin is for our comfort, as restraining those irregular impulses which are prejudicial to worldly happiness and progress. So essential is religious belief to social order, that one has well said that, if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent the idea. Suppose, however, that there were no presumption in favour of belief over unbelief, and that each theory were equally uncertain, the believer exposes himself to no risk; if all things end at death he has suffered no harm; but if the unbeliever should prove to be wrong, what a fearful awakening it will be to discover that he is cut off for ever from the perfect life which he obstinately rejected. Rejoice in your possession of the faith. Truly "happy is the people whose God is the Lord" (Ps. cxliii. 15).

II. The theory of human life proposed by faith is far better than the blank ignorance which is the only alternative. Man is for ever speculating and seeking a solution of the tragical enigma of his destinies. Christianity supplies the only answer; it is complete, consistent and rational. It tells us of our origin and the purpose of our being, it gives us an object worth living for and suffering for, it explains

the great mystery of sin, the uses of evil, the means of neutralizing it, and it comforts us with the assurance that good will one day triumph. Christianity affirms the dignity and equality of all men as sons of God and objects of His love. It assures men of a future life, of the permanent results of their efforts, of their final perfection. If it humbles us by telling us we are fallen, it tells us also of the redemption that counterbalances the evil. The world needs anything that it will add to its fleeting moments of happiness, that will rouse men to a sense of their dignity, and stimulate them to brave and noble action. There is no greater barbarity and cruelty than to rob mankind of such ideas; mere conjecture or doubt can never justify that course. Pray God to enlighten the victims of such calamitous unbelief.

III. One of the chief objects of our belief is Jesus Christ. Even if it were possible that the mind of man could have evolved such an ideal, that conception would still be the greatest intellectual and moral treasure of our race. To raise a hand against it would still be a treason and a sacrilege. The figure of Jesus is the only adequate manifestation to us of infinite goodness and beauty; it ennobles our conception of human nature; it has inspired directly or indirectly every step of progress, every activity of the human soul, every work of beneficence, every branch of art. The most perfect among men, the most useful and venerable lives, are those which have been modelled after Christ. The thought of Him is the illumination of the death-bed. How much poorer would the world have been, even on the natural level, if it had been deprived of this ideal? Apart from all consideration of the supernatural, which is the nobler and more useful system, that which has proposed such a model of perfection or that which blasphemes against it? If you would promote the cause of good against evil in the world, strive first to love and serve Jesus, and then to make Him known.

8.—THE COURSE OF FAITH.

I. Ordinary science is acquired by observation, study, reasoning, information. The supernatural science of God in faith is different. It is the gift of God, not dependent on our abilities or our efforts, unintelligible to those who do not possess it. The habit or potentiality must first be infused into the soul from above; and this, in the ordinary course, is effected by Baptism, which therefore is called an Illumination. The habit may exist independently of its exercise, as the habit or potentiality of reason exists in infants who have not yet arrived at the use of it. The genesis of faith proceeds in three stages with those who have the power of putting it into action by means of conscious knowledge and the assent to it. 1. The truth has to be proposed as reasonably credible through the voice of God speaking in Scripture or the Church. 2. This external grace is accompanied by an inward illumination of the intellect and a motion towards the truth impressed on the will. 3. Then follows the consent of the will, and the harmony of the human with the divine action. The two former elements are from God; the last is from man, and is influenced by the character which he has formed for himself by his habits of action. By being unfaithful in small things, man prepares himself to be unfaithful in that which is great; and he may so harden his heart as to make it impervious to divine influences like the heart of Pharaoh. God "will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4). Thank Him for the light and be faithful to it.

II. The maintenance of Faith corresponds to its genesis. It increases and remains vigorous, not in virtue of our deeper study, firmer intellectual grasp of divine knowledge, or natural gifts of acuteness and determination, but dependently on God

and sanctifying grace. The acquired habit of grasping and believing the doctrines of faith is rendered more vigorous by the application of the natural powers of our mind to them; but even this element of faith is dependent more on our moral and spiritual than on our intellectual qualities. Thus the acquired habit of spiritual knowledge differs from the mental habit of ordinary science. Humility is a condition of spiritual knowledge, for God reveals His truths to little ones (Matt. xi. 25), and faith is an act of self-sacrifice and submission. Chastity too affects the capacity for faith: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). Strive to increase this sacred science in your soul by the grace of God, by frequent acts of faith, and the exercise of your mind in the study of divine truth. God will then unveil His mysteries to you, according to that: "Many things are shown to thee above the understanding of men" (Eccli. iii. 25).

III. Unlike other knowledge Faith may be lost otherwise than by forgetfulness. By sins, especially of pride, lust, worldliness, the appreciation of divine truths is diminished, the soul falls into a state of darkness, and becomes unable to believe. Again, those who choose and reject articles of belief according to their fancy lose the faith, considered as the infused gift of God, and retain only a mere natural belief of certain truths, that is without merit and is no homage to God. At the end of this life Faith ceases to exist. In the case of the blessed, their knowledge of truths on God's authority is changed into the knowledge which comes from clear vision of the truth in its fulness. The wicked also are shut out from the possibility of supernatural faith, but they have not ceased to believe. On the contrary those who have refused to believe upon the authority of God and His Church will arrive at full belief on the compulsion of terrible experience. Do not presume on your faith. It is possible to lose it. Ask God that you may keep it intact until it merges into vision.

9.—THE NECESSITY OF FAITH.

I. The operation of the intelligence is the first step in all human responsible action. Supernatural action must therefore begin with supernatural consciousness, and the knowledge of that higher order; and faith becomes the necessary foundation of the divine life in us. That which we can work out for ourselves by natural methods is not sufficient; it can never be more than is contained in the inferior and worldly order of things, and will never admit us into the higher universe where God is unveiled in new ways to the soul's perceptions. Faith is a necessary condition of every act of supernatural virtue. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). We must have this infused gift in order to grasp divine truths, to nurture aspirations that rise beyond this world, to make the invisible a present reality to us, to feel actual love for God. We need the influence of a higher knowledge and higher hopes, to help us to resist the passions of sense, to avoid sin, to bear the troubles of life, to meet death with tranquillity and joy. What an immense field of new action faith opens to us! What value it gives to our actions! It is not a yoke laid upon us, not a restraint and servitude of our natural faculties, but happiness, glory and new life.

II. Faith is necessary for us, because God's Providence requires the service of our highest faculties, and has decreed that the homage of our intelligence in this life shall take the form of believing on His authority without the satisfaction of fathoming the intrinsic evidence of the truths He places before us. We have to admit His supreme knowledge and supreme veracity, and to accept the knowledge of truths by the method that He has appointed, and that supersedes the natural methods which belong to our mundane life. We thus reverse the rebellious action of Adam and Eve. We withdraw from their claim to eat of the tree of natural knowledge and that alone; and God in return gives us to

eat of the tree of life and supernatural knowledge. Faith is further necessary for us as members of an organized society, the Church of God. Trust in our fellow-men and the reception of truth on their word is one of the first conditions of any society. Of all that men know and act upon in this life, very little is the result of each man's own private investigations. If we are not self-sufficing in the natural sphere, still less are we so in regard of the truths that transcend nature. "Faith then cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x. 17). God has appointed that we should receive His word through the intermediary of the sacred writers and the rulers of His Church; and our faith is at once a homage to Him, and a social duty on which the present organization of His kingdom is based. Show always a trusting and generous faith towards God and His Church.

III. It is necessary for us to exercise our faith in different ways. 1. Internally. We must give our intellectual assent to every particle of divine truth, and value it as a crumb from the table of the Lord. Some articles we may know explicitly in their details; but if leisure or intelligence fail us, we must accept implicitly with equal firmness such articles of the divine teaching as are hidden from our view. If opportunity allows, we should cultivate an intelligent faith, studying to understand the details of religion and to give "a reason of that hope which is within us" (1 Pet. iii. 15). 2. Externally. We must acknowledge our faith when occasion arises, and be not ashamed to carry out its practices openly. "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). Our Lord declares solemnly that He will either acknowledge us or deny us before His Father in heaven accordingly as we shall have confessed Him or denied Him before men (Matt. x. 32, 33). Be ready to do this duty even at the peril of your life. Be fearless in the service of God and always true to your principles.

10.—LIVING BY FAITH.

I. Faith in the revelation of God is not made complete by simply believing. It has to be the beginning of much else; it does not end with knowledge, it must pass into practice; its first exercise is in the intellect, but it must thence be diffused over our whole life. Just as intelligence and free-will distinguish us in every one of our actions from the brute beasts, so should active faith characterize the life of every servant of God. We should live in an atmosphere of faith, and always act by its guidance. "The just man liveth by faith" (Heb. x. 38). "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself" (Jas. ii. 17). We live by faith: 1. When we constantly feel the vivid reality of those things that we believe, and are absolutely certain about them, and value them more highly than all outward possessions or inward attainments. 2. When our action is in full accordance with our belief, and we carry out exactly the line of conduct dictated by the truths of revelation. The motives, and principles, and aims, and many of the actions of him whose life is guided by faith, will be perfectly different from those of the man who is guided by sensual appetites and worldly ideas. Consider your thoughts and words and actions. Are they in any way different from those of unbelievers and pagans? Is your life Christ-like and divine, or is it identical with the lives of those who believe only and desire only the things of this life? In what respect are you deficient?

II. To the eye of God, which sees all things according to their reality, there are two great classes of men, as noted by the Apostle, the spiritual and the carnal, the heavenly and the earthly, the supernatural and the natural. The fundamental distinction between them is the presence or the absence of a living faith; and the whole tenor of their lives varies accordingly. "A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt. xii. 35).

Faith, living and active, gives energy and success to the labours of apostles; it inspires the heroic courage and self-sacrifice of martyrs; it enables hundreds of thousands to resign the pleasures and possessions of life for the sake of serving the invisible Divinity; it helps the weakest to triumph over fierce temptations, whether in the form of terrors or allurements; it is the source of most of the beneficence practised on earth. On the other hand, it is the absence of faith that turns the balance to the side of evil, and makes passion and animal impulse predominant, and starts all anti-religious, anti-Christian and anti-social action. Almost all crime and misery may be traced back to the weakness, or confusion, or extinction of faith. Do not allow your faith to be forced into the background, or held captive by any low considerations. Let it be always a lamp to your feet and a light to your paths (Ps. cxviii. 105).

III. There are certain general principles suggested by faith, which should always be present to us and rule our lives. 1. We should remember that God is present as the witness and the judge of our actions. 2. We should think of Our Lord, not as an historical personage, but as an intimate friend with whom we can always converse face to face in His churches. 3. Sin must not be regarded as a trivial or an amusing thing, but as a treachery and outrage against God, which will have most tragical results. 4. In temptation we should remember the reward of heaven and the terrors of hell, as if they were to follow immediately on our decision. 5. As for riches and poverty, affliction and pleasure, humiliation and honour, labour and idleness, we should recall the words and example of Our Lord, and bear ourselves as He did. 6. We should remember that life is short, that death is close at hand, and the next life eternal; that this world is worth nothing except as a preparation for the next, that strict retribution awaits every action, and that God is the only worthy object of our service, desire and love.

11.—RELIGIOUS ERROR.

I. The perfection of the intellect consists in the knowledge of truth, for it is in this form that the image of God is impressed upon it. Knowledge is power and satisfaction; and much more so is that knowledge which regards the highest divine truths. Truth has its opposite, which is for ever contending against it for the mastery during the present life; and, in proportion to the dignity and benefits of truth, its opposites, error and falsehood, are injurious and horrible. Even in mundane matters falsehood is an evil and the source of further evils; and still more is this the case in the spiritual sphere, where it contradicts the truth concerning the highest of all objects, God, and the truths that are the root of right living and our future salvation. Error is never a mere matter of speculative opinion. The evil tree must produce evil fruits. Ideas are the basis of action, they live and fructify, they survive all violence, and produce their effects good or bad. The intelligence which rules our lives cannot be misinformed and perverted without producing far-reaching effects. One error will generate others indefinitely; and, although truth is immortal, it is long before it can overtake and extinguish a well-established falsehood. Never consider that any falsity is a trivial matter. False belief may indeed at times be involuntary and therefore free from guilt, but it is not the less a product of the father of lies, and the ancestor of a long line of evils. Watch most carefully against its smallest encroachment.

II. Faith is the habit of the intellect which grasps supernatural truth. The Fall has left in the intellect a propension towards falsehood, especially in the sphere of divine things. There is no error, however gross and absurd, that will not attract numerous adherents. Some follow it from apparently an affinity of their minds for error; others, less perverted, are attracted by those decoys which are set about every error, certain fragments of truth, certain plau-

sible pretensions or promises which will never be fulfilled; others are moved by prejudice against the truth because its surroundings are not so perfect as they will be in the future kingdom. Falsehood presents itself in countless forms to suit every taste, and accommodates itself to times and places and fashions. Its principal manifestations are atheism, paganism, or the worship of false gods, deism, which recognizes a God but not His revelation, Judaism, which accepts the anterior revelation but not its accomplishment in the Messias, and heresy, which is the obstinate adhesion of a Christian to an error concerning some points of revealed doctrine. With all these weapons does the spirit of falsehood ever seek to adulterate, or maim, or destroy the one invariable complete system of truth. You must suffer attacks of some sort from the father of lies. Your intellect must be chastened by trial like all your other faculties. Watch and pray against temptation, fight it bravely, and turn it to the strengthening of your faith.

III. The deliberate adhesion to positive or suspected religious error is a very grave sin and fraught with terrible peril. Resisting the known truth is one of the sins against the Holy Ghost, as impeding one of His characteristic operations. It is a poisoning of the sources of action, for it destroys supernatural faith, which is necessary in order to please God; it perverts the intelligence, which is the principle of activity, it uproots the foundation of repentance, and leads to a hardening of the heart and an inability to see the truth and hear the voice of God. It further breaks up the union of mind and thought which supports union of heart and affection, and which makes the followers of Christ to be one as He and the Father are one. The Gospels, especially St. John's, show that such intellectual and spiritual dishonesty must be far from infrequent; it is secret, it involves no stigma from public opinion, and no one may without rash judgment question its claim to the excuse of sincerity. Deceit may go so far as to deceive self, but it cannot deceive God.

12.—THE NATURE OF HOPE.

I. The second step in the development of the supernatural life, after the enlightenment of the intelligence, is the movement of the will. The soul first knows and understands the great object of attainment exposed to it, and then aspires towards it, desires it, and is moved to attain it. This movement of the faculties is different from the first one contained in faith, and requires a different impulse from God, or a new habit or facility or potentiality in the soul. This habit is the supernatural virtue of Hope. Hope is not a positive assurance of attaining, it is a desire joined with confidence and expectation, encouraging the soul to make the necessary effort; it presupposes that there are difficulties to be surmounted, and it prevents the soul from being cast down by them. Hope is involved with Faith and Charity; they are three methods by which the soul apprehends God, or three views that it takes of the one great object, or a triple form of its one service. So the Apostle speaks of faith as "the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. xi. 1). Hope belongs only to the present life. It does not exist in the blessed, for they are in the state of possession and not of anticipation; they no longer desire God or expect Him, for they enjoy Him and have nothing more to look forward to. Always exercise this virtue as part of the consequence of faith, and as a homage that God requires of you. Take care not to waste your desires on any other object, but seek better things, "forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth to those that are before" (Phil. iii. 13).

II. The first and direct object of the theological virtue of Hope is God, and God alone, or the possession of God, in which is constituted our eternal beatitude. The secondary object follows from the first. Aspiring to God, the soul aspires to and expects from His goodness the necessary means of attaining to Him. We hope therefore for the

grace of God, forgiveness of our sins, strength in our conflicts, light to guide us, perseverance to the end, the resurrection and deliverance from evils, the society of the angels and the just. We may desire and expect special benefits from God of a temporal character; and these also may be the object of the same theological virtue, if we seek them in reliance on God's promises, and for the supernatural purpose of advancing His glory and our salvation. The merely natural requirements and conceptions of mundane existence could not inspire such lofty aspirations in us, nor any expectation of rising so high. It is necessary therefore that the suggestion should come from God, with the strength to carry it out in the form of the infused theological virtue of Hope. The spiritual man has thus new wants and new supernatural perceptions not comprehended by the carnal man nor desired by him, and therefore not to be attained by him, unless he convert himself thoroughly to God.

III. It is most necessary for the faithful to exercise this gift of God in frequent action. 1. In order to our justification and sanctification; because, approaching to God, we have to believe in Him as rewarding us, *i.e.*, as the object of our hope (Heb. xi. 6). 2. It is part of the homage that we owe to God, that we should recognize Him as our last end and the great and worthy object of our desires. 3. Confidence in God and in His promises is necessary that we may obtain them. Of him that wavers in his hope the Apostle says, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (Jas. i. 7). 4. Hope is a necessary spur to all ordinary activity; there must be some resultant benefit in prospect; when hope is gone all efforts cease, and nothing remains but death. The same is true in the spiritual life. God places the greatest of all possible prospects before us for our encouragement. If we reflect on these as we ought, and stimulate our hope, we shall become capable of everything, of life-long endurance, heroic effort, renunciation of all things, joy in martyrdom, and imperturbable peace.

13.—THE MOTIVES OF HOPE.

I. It is most important for us to ascertain that the cherished hopes on which we have staked our all are well-grounded. Most sad it is to see a man expending his energies in pursuing an object that exists only in his imagination; and the servants of God would be, as St. Paul says, the most miserable of men if their expectations turned out to be delusions. They would have sacrificed all and gained nothing; greed and sensuality would indeed be the highest wisdom. But the sight of the goodness and power that rule this universe, and our sense of right and equity, utterly forbid such a conclusion. Religion and revelation provide us with assurance stronger still. We know that God exists, infinite, merciful, equitable; we know that He has spoken to us, and that we possess His actual words; all this He has further confirmed to us in Jesus Christ, whose life renews the old promises and bestows still better ones. So we have learnt the fatherly goodness of God towards men, the bounty with which He provides for our salvation, the forgiveness that is ready for every sinner, and the patience which awaits his repentance. Imagine all that you can of omnipotence, of intense love, of tenderness to human weakness and folly, of provision for men's salvation, and then remember that the reality exceeds ten thousand times all the possibilities of imagination. How abundant are the grounds of your hope! The greatest offence against God is to set a limit to your hope and trust. Hope in Him and you will never be confounded.

II. 1. Consider in general the operations of God as revealed in nature. "Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made" (Wisd. xi. 25). All things are provided with what they need for the purposes of life and for their perfection; all the arrangements of the universe are harmonious, efficient, progressive. "Are not you of much more value than they?" (Matt. vi. 26). How much you have reason to expect from God in the way of present help and the future attainment

to perfection, considering that man is the highest work of His hand on earth, and that all the expenditure of goodness on the rest of creation is for his sake! 2. Consider the operations of God as manifested in Christ Our Lord—the work of the Incarnation, the life, the labours, the death of Jesus. He who did so much for us will not neglect anything else which may be necessary for our salvation; nor will He allow His great work to end in futility. The enormous energies put in motion in the Redemption must have an infinite and lasting effect on the souls of the redeemed. Let no temptation make you mistrust the goodwill of God towards men. Whatever you need or desire, you may justly hope for more; however much God has hitherto done for you, He will yet do more.

III. Some may say, however, The fulfilment of our hopes depends on ourselves as well as on God; may it not be that our sinfulness will counteract the divine goodness? Consider the character of the present dispensation. It is not like that of the angels. They were tried; and heaven was the award of the faithful, hell of the wicked. As regards men, God has arranged for the restitution of the unworthy, and for making a new creation out of the ruins left by sin. Hell was not made for sinful men, but for the devil and his angels (Matt. xxv. 41). Under the economy of Redemption heaven is the place for sinners. It was for them and not for the just that Christ came. The great glory of God and the joy of His angels consists in the sight of the sinner turning to penance. Our sins and miseries actually constitute our claim on God's mercy, and, we might almost say, our qualification for heaven; for even the greatest saints must present themselves before the throne in the garb of sinners; and when we appeal to God's love, it must be on the ground of our sins and not of our virtues. God has allowed us to become sinners, not that He might take vengeance on us, but that He might exercise His greatest power in His greatest mercy. Repent only, and your past sins will become a motive for increased and not for diminished hope.

14.—HOPE AND FEAR.

I. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and in them that hope in His mercy" (Ps. cxlvi. 11). Hope and fear might appear to be contradictory terms, yet Scripture in the Old and New Testament enjoins them both together. They are not inconsistent when rightly understood. There is, indeed, a kind of fear which is an offence against God, a cringing slavish fear as of an arbitrary master, which would willingly sin against Him if it were not for the personal consequences. But there is also a reverential and loving fear, as of a son who dreads to offend a tender father, and lose his esteem and affection. God Himself places the two alternatives before us as motives to serve Him, the prospect of possessing Him if we are faithful, and the dread punishment of eternal separation from Him if we persist in sin. The thought of reward is a legitimate motive for the practice of virtue; and the dread of hell makes for righteousness, and is therefore legitimate as restraining us from sin. In the old times it was specially necessary to develop the terrors of divine judgments to a half-civilized and stiff-necked oriental race; but even now our love is by no means so perfect that we can afford to dispense with the inferior motive as a supplement to the higher. Certain systems of religion make the mistake of looking at one aspect of the truth while neglecting the other. Some indulge an excessive confidence without attending to the duty of holy fear; others promote discouragement till it destroys all hope. Cultivate both virtues at once; let each balance the other and maintain a perfect harmony.

II. While we have the weightiest reasons for hope, we have not less for fear. We have grounds for hope when we think of God, for fear when we think of ourselves. God will never abandon us of Himself, but there is always danger lest we should abandon Him; and the perversity of our free-will can prevail over His infinite mercy and patience. Further, while we dwell on the tender fatherhood of God, we must never forget His awful majesty, His infinite distance above

us, His unapproachable holiness, and our wretchedness before Him. He is not only Love, He is also Law with its terrible uniformity and sternness. God holds the dread secret of our destinies. As long as we live we can never know if we be deserving of love or hatred. God alone knows; and He, to whom the future is as the present, sees each of us now as if actually in the place we shall one day occupy in heaven or in hell. Jesus Christ, in spite of the revelation of divine love contained in His every action, yet tells us: "Fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. x. 28). Beware then that you do not misinterpret the mercy of God as being a weak leniency and indifference to sin; and do not think that filial confidence consists in easy familiarity with the Divine Majesty, and contemptuous negligence in His service. Say rather: "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear: for I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. cxviii. 120).

III. Hope and fear must equally guide your life. Each will both supplement and restrain the other. In the deficiency of either, you are in danger of going to the opposite extreme, and falling into one of the sins against the Holy Ghost, presumption or despair. If expectation is too secure and has no apprehension of losing its object, it may pass into carelessness and presumption; too great fear of perils may lead to discouragement and despair. Hope is like the sails of the ship, fear is its ballast; the one impels, the other restrains; and between the two there is equilibrium. These two virtues present to us the two necessary aspects of God, the sternness of His justice and the tenderness of His mercy, and they save us from the error of dwelling exclusively on one or the other; fear checks excessive confidence, hope saves us from depression; the one renders us energetic in action, the other makes us cautious. See on which side your predominant failing lies, and take care to counteract it, lest your ideas become unbalanced. "Ye that fear the Lord hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight" (Eccli. ii. 9).

15.—SINS AGAINST HOPE.

I. The two sins against Hope are Despair and Presumption; and each results from the suppression of one, and the excess of the other element of the virtue - hope and fear. Despair is an aversion from our final beatitude and ceasing to struggle for it, as if it were unattainable. Its malice consists in that it denies the goodness of God, His care for us, and fidelity to His promises. This was the sin of Cain and Judas. Forgiveness was ready for each, but they said, "My iniquity is greater than that I can deserve pardon" (Gen. iv. 13). There is another and less acute form of despair; it is the state of those who, having no faith, look forward to nothing beyond this life, strive for nothing, and therefore obtain nothing. A long course of sin and resistance to truth and grace leads to a state of practical irreligiousness; then belief in every revealed doctrine gradually ceases, and with it all higher hopes; and then such sinners pass into the ranks of those numerous ones "who, despairing, have given themselves up to the working of all uncleanness unto covetousness" (Eph. iv. 19). Despair is a foretaste of the hopeless misery of the lost. Never admit the fear that holy living is impossible, or temptation too strong, or that the means of salvation will fail you. Do not fear the insufficiency of your works or of your dispositions when you have done your best. Your works are all of necessity imperfect, but the merits of Our Lord compensate, and make them acceptable.

II. The second sin against Hope is Presumption on God's mercy. Presumption is a rash and ungrounded expectation that we shall attain to beatitude without fulfilling the necessary conditions, neglecting to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, thinking that God will do all, and that we do not need to co-operate with grace. This conception is again a distortion of the true idea of God, by ignoring His rigid holiness, and making mockery of His commands and threats. Presumption is an attempt to take

advantage of the mercy of God, as an inducement to continue in sin, to dishonour Him by reason of His very goodness, and to make Him serve in our iniquities. It insults the all-wise, all-seeing God by trying to hoodwink Him, and get all the pleasure of sin with all the reward of obedience. Such is the sin of those who will not answer when God calls, but expect Him to wait until they are ready; or of those who intend to repent, but defer it till their dying day, so that they may enjoy both worlds to the full. Such cleverness is very likely to overreach itself, for God is not to be mocked. Presumption, like despair, is a sin against the Holy Ghost, not easily repented of and cured. Guard yourself against the remotest approaches of this sin, by holy fear, great awe of the Divine Majesty, and exactness in carrying out promptly every inspiration.

III. There is another form of Presumption opposed to Hope. This is a reliance on our own powers and virtues instead of on God, a misplaced hope in ourselves. Such was the sin of the Pharisee. This is exhibited variously. We perhaps think ourselves capable of doing well by the force of our own right hand, we trust in our own ability to resist temptation without constant prayer and the Sacraments, and we have no hesitation in exposing ourselves to perils of sin. Or it may be that we put our confidence in our firm faith, or outward religious practices, or consider ourselves to be already justified, confirmed in goodness, and beyond the danger of sin and eternal loss. Again there is a presumption which takes the form of pride in our natural virtues, and contempt for the supernatural ones and the grace that is necessary for them. We deceive ourselves by imagining that our presumption is an honourable self-reliance and independence of character, when it is only the pride that offends God and induces a fall. Even your virtues may become a source of danger and material for sin, "Let him that thinketh himself to stand take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12).

16.—THE NATURE OF CHARITY.

I. Charity is the third and final one of the virtues that regard God directly and in Himself. As the natural man cannot know God in the supernatural order, neither can he so love God, except by means of a special infused facility which is the habit of charity. Love is the impulsion and affection of the rational creature towards that which is first in the order of being, *viz*. Life. The primary cravings of all beings are towards life and the means of sustaining it. For the maintenance of life there are implanted in all organic beings certain automatic impulses, or sense emotions, or instincts, or rational motives, whose object is the life of the individual or of the species. The sum of these forces in the rational creature is Love. It manifests itself as self-love, conjugal love, parental and filial love, patriotism, philanthropy; and in a secondary sense, with reference to the means of life, we speak of the love of food, wealth, action, etc. God is the supreme Life in Himself, and the source of all life, the support of life, the fulfilment of life. He is the first necessity of every being. The tendency of all being is then towards Him, either directly in Himself or indirectly through His creatures. Irrational creatures serve Him, rational creatures love Him, all require Him. "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season" (Ps. cxliv. 15). Great is the virtue of Charity, which enables you to cleave consciously to the Supreme Life, especially in its unveiled manifestation of Itself on the supernatural plane hereafter.

II. In his natural life, man is capable of knowing God, not in Himself but inferentially, and of loving Him only in the measure of His manifestation of Himself through creatures. But the supernatural life is a closer relation to God by knowledge, desire, and delight. Faith gives us the facility for knowing, Charity for loving Him; and by these we apprehend God as the Supreme Life which is also our life. As life is the primary force in creation, the preserva-

tion of life is the first law of nature: so, in the supernature, the first law of life, considered both as a primary impulse and as a statute law of revelation, is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." In the present state, where supernatural vital action is voluntary and not spontaneous, and where the sense of the natural predominates, men do not feel the direct force of the attraction of the Supreme Life, but only know of it by revelation, and become sensible to it by grace. But when corporeal impediments are removed, the impulsion towards Supreme Life will be overwhelming, every faculty will crave for It, the possession of It will be satisfaction and joy ineffable. Such God will be to you, if in this life you have renounced natural for supernatural love.

III. The natural impulsion towards life (*i.e.*, love), if narrowed to the individual, becomes injurious to the larger life beyond, and, therefore, to the highest love. Love, to attain its fulness, must be diffusive. Hence, in the lower creation we find that the forces which tend to the advancement of the species prevail over those which benefit the individual. Among rational and supernatural beings the same effect is wrought out by charity and voluntary self-sacrifice. The highest form of love is to give one's life for the brethren. The subordination of the impulse of individual life to the general life is the great unitive and preservative force in all human society. "If he shall lay down his life . . . He shall see a long-lived seed" (Isa. liii. 10). Supernatural faith and grace are necessary in order to effect this among men. The wisdom of God has found a way of giving us an example of this wonderful love. Though Himself immortal, and although necessarily unable to make the impulsion towards his own Supreme Life subordinate to an inferior object—created life, yet He has manifested a divine self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ laid down a divine life for the sake of the life of His creatures. Learn to subordinate the impulses of natural vitality to the claims of the higher life in God and the general life in your brethren.

17.—CHARITY TOWARDS CREATURES.

I. The infused divine virtue of Charity embraces not only God, who is its proper object, but, supernatural as it is, it is yet brought down from the heights of heaven to embrace the members of the natural order. The divine and the worldly, widely separated and even opposed in some respects, have yet a point of union, which makes it possible that the sentiment which we entertain towards God should extend in a certain degree to that which is so far beneath Him. In the ordinary course of things our attachment to any person makes us solicitous about all that is connected with him. If we truly venerate and love God, and remember the relations that all things bear to Him, and see His likeness or His vestiges in them, and the signs of His love and care for them, we shall value and love them for His sake. This charity extends chiefly to men, not only as our brethren, but as the principal work of God. Hence arises the second commandment which is like the first, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 39). And again: "He who loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (1 John iv. 20). According to St. Thomas, the extension of the divine virtue of charity embraces also the animal and inanimate creation. It is a good trait of character when one loves to commune with nature; it is felt that this is in some sense communing with God. On the other hand, to do harm to God's inferior creatures shows an insensibility to God and want of love towards Him. Take care that your charity overflow and extend to all that God has made and that He loves.

II. It is necessary that man should have supernatural principle to guide him in the love that he owes to natural beings. For the true direction of natural love has been diverted by the fall, and the individualist impulses have become hostile to the general life. The instincts and checks which in the lower creation keep the individual good subordinate to the good of the species should be supplied in human

life by reason; and the influence of the fall on reason has to be counteracted by grace. The attitude of fallen man is of hostility rather than of love towards his kind. Brotherhood comes to be limited to the narrowest circle, and gradually gives place to selfishness. The progress of society comes to be carried on, not by mutual aid but by crushing all others and mounting on their corpses. Until the law of Christ was established, no other system was understood in the pagan world; and the modern world is developing the old paganism under new forms as it departs more widely from the knowledge and love of God. The two kinds of charity stand or fall together. Whatever you do to your neighbour counts as done to Jesus Christ. It is only by adhesion to the love of the Supreme Life through the infusion of Charity that you will be able to promote the derivative forms of life in yourself, in the family, in the state, in natural society, and the society of the children of God.

III. Unity and harmony are maintained in lower nature by automatic mechanisms; and among men, by their free activity under the supernatural influence of Charity. The great unitive influence is to be sought only in God: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us" (John xvii. 21). This is to be attained by the union of intelligence in God through one faith, and by a common impulsion towards the same Supreme Life in God and His life in us, through Charity. Without this, even natural social unity is not to be thoroughly attained. The natural influence of common humanity, of common colour, nationality and parentage cannot overcome the internecine hostilities of class and class, of interests and interests, between rich and poor, strong and weak, and between brother and brother. The law of unity, of society, of progress, was of old, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; Jesus Christ has given us a more elevated law: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John xv. 12). Take care that you do not stop at anything short of this.

18.—THE EFFECTS OF CHARITY.

I. Self-preservation, or the impulsion towards personal life, or self-love, is the first instinct and law of being. Yet the positive law of God does not lay down this duty of loving ourselves; for 1. our tendency to the maintenance of natural life is already inordinate and excessive; and 2. the law of maintaining and loving our supernatural life is coincident with, or even identical with the first of all commandments, the love of God. For God is the source of our life: "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). The propension towards the Supreme Life is also the propension towards our own life. On the other hand, indifference towards God and adhesion to His contradictory, sin, is identical with cutting ourselves off from life and all its advantages. "He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul" (Ps. x. 6). The sinner hates his own soul as depriving it of its true life; he hates his body as leaving it exposed to eternal torments. The supposed love of self involved in sin is only the kind of love that would humour an infant by giving it an open razor to play with. The real nature of self-indulgence is at present veiled, and is to be known only through faith; but its effects will one day show that the love of God is the only true and legitimate love of self, and that sin is self-hatred and self-destruction. The love of God is the only form of self-love in which there is no selfishness, no meanness and narrowness, but only glory to God and benefit to mankind.

II. Another result of the infused habit of Charity when carried out in action, is that it establishes the intimate relation of friendship between the infinitely great and holy and the infinitely small and degraded. It is wonderful that this relation of quasi-equality should be able to exist between the Eternal who fills all space with His immensity, and the miserable inhabitants of this insignificant speck of dust floating in the cosmos. The Almighty lowers Himself towards us and raises us to fellowship with Himself. "I will not now call you servants . . . but I have called you

friends" (John xv. 15). In virtue of this, there subsists between God and the justified soul 1. a reciprocal love and delight of each in the other; 2. a good-will by which God desires to confer infinite benefits on man, and man wishes to do all he can for God; and 3. a communication of possessions from one to the other: we render to God the service of intellect, will, imagination, senses, action, and He grants us a return that exceeds all measure and desert. "He hath given us very great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). No happiness is so great as this. It is amply sufficient for you in the absence of every other advantage, to know that God is always your firm friend, and that He loves you and accepts your love with delight. Let nothing separate you from Him in life or death.

III. A further effect of the infused habit of Charity is that it vivifies all the other virtues and gives them their supernatural character. The presence of this gift creates a wide distinction between the virtues of the natural and of the supernatural plane, although to our present observation they may appear to be of equal value. The natural virtues possess an intrinsic excellence of their own, and produce their proper good results in the world; but virtue is only perfect when inspired by the supernatural habit of Charity proceeding from God and acting in man; then it is directed by love towards the Supreme Life, and not towards any partial or narrow form of life. Divine love directs all the actions towards God as their end, it makes us carry out all that the will of God requires of us, and the faithful service of God reacts again by leading us to the state of charity with God. Therefore it is written that "love is the fulfilment of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10); and again Christ says, "If you love Me keep My commandments" (John xiv. 15). The degree of your love will be the measure of your service of God, of the remission of your sins and their penalties, of your merit here and the degree of your glory hereafter.

19.—THE PROGRESS OF CHARITY.

I. The law of progress which rules the spiritual as well as the material world requires that the servants of God should for ever advance in the supereminent virtue of Charity. That virtue, as we are told, is the sum of the goodness and grace by which our souls are made holy and pleasing in the sight of God; it is the source and the sum of all obedience, all virtue, all supernatural actions; it is the one out of the theological virtues which will never fail but abide for ever in a degree of consummate perfection. The progress of our lives may then be summed up as an advance in Charity. The Old Testament says: "The path of the just, like a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18). The Apostle expresses the same doctrine when he says: "This I pray, that your charity may more and more abound" (Phil. i. 9). Charity may be increased in us, 1. in the sense that God infuses into us a larger amount of that grace equally with sanctifying grace; 2. in the sense that our sentiment of love for God rises to a greater intensity, or that it extends to a greater number of objects, either men or angels; 3. in the sense that the facility of producing actions of Charity becomes greater as a result of more frequent exercise. The increase of Charity in each of these ways is effected primarily by the action of God upon the soul, and secondarily by the Sacraments, which are the channels of God's grace. Strive to advance every day and every hour of your life from virtue to virtue, till you attain that degree of perfection which God has appointed for you.

II. The immanent habit of Charity, which accompanies sanctifying grace, and which conveys the facility for performing actions of Charity, is from God. Our share in the operation and progress of Charity is to produce the fruits of the immanent habit, to acquire the habit of action which comes

from frequent repetition, and so to increase our merit here, and the intensity of our future life of perfect Charity. The chief exercises of divine Charity are these, 1. The preference of God before all other things in heaven and on earth, readiness to sacrifice all that pertains to bodily, social and intellectual life, rather than to risk our possession of the supreme supernatural life. 2. Obedience to the whole law, which is both an effect and a cause of charity. 3. Submission to the will of God in all that He lays upon us in the way of action or endurance. 4. The reference of all our activity to God, as the goal to which it should all tend. 5. Frequent mental aspirations of affection, desire, and joy in God. Consider each of these exercises separately: examine yourself upon them; see whether you are deficient in any one of them; resolve to practise them better in future.

III. In the spiritual progress of the soul to God, which is also a progress in Charity, there are three definite grades through which we must pass. 1. The Purgative Way. We begin as sinners full of vices, bad habits, evil tendencies, which are enough to arrest all progress. We must first clear these away, like the weeds and trees and stumps from a virgin soil, by means of contrition, penance, mortification, and the acquirement of self-restraint. 2. The Illuminative Way. In this we are illuminated by the vivifying rays of grace that proceed from Jesus Christ as the Sun of justice, and by the example of perfect manhood in Him; and we have to plant and nurture the flowers of all His virtues. 3. The Unitive Way. This is the final stage of Charity in this world; it unites us in likeness, in affection, in community of sentiment with Our Lord and His heavenly Father. We live in continual communication with God; we become capable of heroic virtues; we enjoy the prelude, and even some slight foretaste of the conditions of the heavenly life. Begin at the lowest step and be ready to obey the call of God when He says to you, "Friend, go up higher" (Luke xiv. 10).

20.—THE DECLINE OF CHARITY.

I. All things change but God. Until we are united with Him after death, we remain always subject to vicissitudes in our spiritual life. No one is confirmed in grace and holiness while the present life endures. The very first in God's favour may fall to be the last; they who have eaten the bread of angels may come to delight in the husks of swine. The world is full of sad examples, from Solomon, the wisest of men, to Judas, one of those chosen to sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel, and thenceforth in every era of history. The great Apostle of the Gentiles did not account himself safe from this peril: "lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a cast-away" (1 Cor. ix. 27). The greatest services rendered to God, the greatest favours received from Him, the greatest holiness attained, afford us no assurance that we shall persevere in Charity to the end. We are fickle, we have great potentialities of evil in us, we never know how much we are capable of, nor how low we may yet fall. We never can be sure of even our actual state before God, nor shall we know it till we stand at His judgment-seat. We may be progressing, but we may also be declining in Charity. So we must never be without fear; we must never presume or count ourselves as if we "had already attained or were already perfect" (Phil. iii. 12). Ask God to enlighten you so that you may at once detect any backsliding or any diminution in Charity. Watch and pray and fear lest you should fail even at the last moment, like a ship that founders as she is entering port.

II. A gradual decline in charity generally precedes its total failure. Venial sin prepares the way for mortal. We become careless first in small things, and at last reckless in great ones. We grow negligent of prayer, we lose graces, we grow accustomed to self-indulgence and smaller infidelities, we forget our weakness and risk danger gaily till we perish in it. We suddenly find ourselves across the line that

separates venial from mortal sin. We forfeit the higher graces of God and the fulness of His protection, by our carelessness in His service, and then we suddenly discover that we have cut ourselves off from the special assistance that we need in some exceptional crisis. Our virtue may be sufficient for ordinary risks, yet we must provide for certain special dangers which may spring upon us suddenly. One mortal sin absolutely destroys the infused habit of charity, and all the effects of charity, all the accumulations of years of virtue, all previous merits, all title to reward; and it reduces the soul to a state of utter spiritual incapacity and supernatural ruin. Thenceforth we cannot recover our lost ground by any effort of our own, but only by a new influx of God which ordinarily comes to us through the Sacraments. The beginnings of decline are obscure, its progress is insidious, and our blindness to it incredible. Never cease to fear and pray.

III. There are certain signs which may serve to reassure us as to our position. 1. Delight in the thought of God, "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (Matt. vi. 21). 2. Love of instruction in spiritual things, "He that is of God heareth the words of God" (John viii. 47). 3. Regularity of life and obedience. "He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me" (John xiv. 21). 4. Love and kindness towards our neighbour. 5. Loyal attachment to the Church and the representatives of God. 6. Aversion from the ideas and ways of the world. 7. The testimony of a good conscience. These signs, however, are not infallible; we may be deceived about some of them, thinking them to be present when they are absent. It happens also that, after divine charity is extinct, the natural habits acquired by a long course of virtue may continue for a while by the force of their previous momentum, and may present the appearance of divine action and become a cause of self-deception. Let this uncertainty not depress you but stimulate you to continual vigour.

21.—THE ORDER IN CHARITY.

I. There is an order of priority in the exercise of charity towards the different objects of our love: this order extends to natural and supernatural love, and corresponds to the order of our adhesion to the different forms of life. God has "ordered all things in measure, number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 21). We must first adhere to the supreme and universal Life, as being the first and the only absolutely necessary life. Then we must seek the perfection of life in the sphere which is our special care; that is, we must love ourselves with a well-ordered love, for our personal salvation is above all other things, and the supernatural love of self is therefore above all love of other creatures, and above the love of our natural life. As regards our fellow-men, their supernatural life is much more than our own natural life, and we should be ready to make a sacrifice accordingly, whenever these two come into competition. If the choice is between the natural life of oneself and one's neighbour, the claims are equal, for we have to love our neighbour as ourselves; but, according to Christian law, it is a more perfect expression of well-ordered love if we give our life for our friends; and this is rational too, for it accords with those provisions of nature in the lower order which make for the maintenance of the life of the species in preference to individual life. Adhere above all to the supreme Life, and this will guide the order of your love in all its other degrees.

II. The supernatural order is not the destruction but the perfecting of the natural order. The vital forces and attractions of the natural sphere indicate in certain cases an order in love which is supernaturally correct. There is community of life in varying degrees between husband and

wife, parents and children, between brethren, fellow-countrymen and fellow-men. These bonds are very close, but those more exclusively supernatural are closer still. The love of God and care for our salvation are above all earthly claims. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37). In God we are further united in the one Church as brethren; with them we share in community of faith, of ideas, of worship, of persecution and calumny, of the breaking of bread in Holy Communion. We are bound to love the Church our spiritual mother, and the general life of that community, and each of our fellow-members in a special degree. Union in Jesus Christ is more than union of nationality or blood. Remember the duty imposed by the Apostle: "Work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

III. The order of Charity in heaven will be the same as its order on earth. The propension of being towards life will become an actual adhesion to life and fruition of it in all its forms. The sentiment of love will therefore be much stronger there than here, and there will be so much more delight in its fulfilment. We shall first be sensible of the infinite vigour of the divine life in its propension towards us, and we shall be drawn in return towards it, and, more fully than now, shall be "made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). The first natural law of self-preservation thus becomes identical with the first supernatural law of adhesion to God; and the love of God will include in itself the well-ordered love of self. Then, too, we shall love all our fellow-creatures in God, and by reason of our adhesion to the life in Him which overflows upon them. And doubtless those who have been associated with our supernatural life in this world will receive a proportionate recognition and love. Enter as fully as you can now into participation in the divine life as it is in God, in the Church, in your fellow-men, that you may participate fully in it hereafter.

22.—THE COMPANIONS OF CHARITY.

I. The first two companions of Charity, most closely associated with it, are Faith and Hope. These precede it and prepare the way before its face; being temporary themselves, they lead on to that which is final and enduring. As the supernatural life of Charity in God is beyond the range of our faculties on earth, we need to be informed of it by Faith before we can voluntarily merge ourselves in it. The world indeed manifests God's life to us, but only in so far as He is the fount of natural life. He has a more recondite perfection as the fount of supernatural life. All this, besides being made known to our intelligence, must be set before us as an object for our attainment, promised by God and placed within our reach. The soul then, before entering into the full enjoyment of that life, aspires to it, wishes for it, expects it with confidence. These two impulsions are completed in Charity, or the love of God, or vital union with Him in a preliminary form on earth and in its perfect form hereafter. After this life Faith and Hope cease. The knowledge on hearsay passes into the knowledge of vision, and expectation into possession; Charity alone remains as an accomplished and eternal adhesion to life without any further need for preliminaries and gradual approaches. Your Charity and your participation in God depend on your Faith and Hope. Take care that natural science and earthly expectations do not obscure that which is supernatural, and alienate your love from it.

II. There are other companions of Charity, *viz.*, the various affections of the mind in which the propension towards life expresses itself. These expressions of love or accompaniments of Charity are principally as follows. Satisfaction and delight in God at the sight of His supreme ex-

cellence; conformity of ideas and will and feeling with Him in all the manifestations of His Providence; benevolence, by which we desire all good to the object of our love, and rejoice in His perfections, happiness, and glory; beneficence, by which we bestow of our own upon Him, our possessions, our services and ourselves; hatred of that which opposes Him or deprives us of the possession of Him. These sentiments extend to all that is related to God, that resembles Him, or recalls Him to our mind. Thus it is that divine Charity or love for God embraces creatures also, and especially men who are made in His image. While philanthropy or humanity draw us towards our fellow-men on account of their community of life with us, Charity draws us to them on account of their community of life with God, the Supreme Life. These acts are not spontaneous as is the case with natural love, and as will be the case with beatific love hereafter; but they are the result of voluntary correspondence with grace and voluntary acceptance of the knowledge of Faith.

III. There are yet other companions of Charity which follow in its train. The love and possession of God in this life casts out all servile fear and bestows an unspeakable peace and joy, which raise men superior to all the trials of this world. It subdues the impulse to selfishness, and helps us to promote the advantage of all those whom God loves. It is a chief source of the generosity and self-sacrifice which are the leaven of this world; and it takes form chiefly in the seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy. These consequences of Charity command the admiration of all, so that men try to reproduce them sporadically and apart from the supernatural system. But those efforts must fail. The real flower can live only when it proceeds from the tree in its completeness with root, trunk, branches and leaves; *i.e.*, from God in His Charity. "Other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. iii. 11).

23.—CHARITY THE SUPREME LAW.

I. The love of God, or absorption into His supreme life, is the last link of the great chain of being which was started at first by God, and which, after long evolution, returns to Him again. The Creation, the arrangement and development of the universe, life, instinct, and reason, the fall and restitution, the Incarnation, the discrimination of men by trial, the law, the Church, the Sacraments, the Resurrection end in this one thing, the return of all being in man to God. The propension of man towards the Supreme Life and his fruition of it are equally the operation of the same vital energy; in other words, Charity abides, it is the same thing in this world and in the next; it is the attainment of God, it is the exercise of our vital energy in the supernatural sphere, it is the accomplishment of the law of our being. Thus Charity, or the love of God, is of its own nature the first and the greatest of all laws; it will be the spontaneous action of life, the first and necessary form of that action, when, through our free choice here, we shall have arrived at the clear vision and full understanding of the Supreme Life in heaven. Regard the love of God as the great purpose of your existence. Let it be your habitual state. Let it be the guiding principle of all your actions, and the measure of all things. So let it be to you the fulfilment of the law.

II. Charity or the love of God does not by any means consist in the mere inward sentiment or cleaving of the affections to God and delight in Him. The craving after life and the realization of life involves the operation of all the forces and faculties of the being aspiring towards that which is their full satisfaction and perfection; it includes, therefore, besides the sentiment of love, all the intellectual, imaginative, moral and corporal activities. The

propension towards the divine life leads us to do everything that gravitates towards God, that is in accordance with His nature and perfections, and that makes like unto God. Most of this is embodied in the positive statute law of God as given in the Old and New Testament. That law is the law of life as being the outward expression for man of the Supreme Life from which it proceeds, as being the condition of our participating in that life under every one of its forms. The observance of the commandments, then, is involved in adhesion to God as the Supreme Life, or again, in other words, "Love is the fulfilment of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). Your love, if true, must be both affective and effective. You can love God whom you see not, because He is revealed in Jesus Christ, true God and true Man: you can learn the law of life from His word and example, and carry it out by the aid of His grace.

III. The attainment to the fulness and perfection of life is worked out by elevating ourselves here, under conditions of difficulty and partial obscurity, to the supernatural plane on which the future life lies. The perfect life of the hereafter is only the continuation and legitimate development of the present life. The same principles prevail in both. It is one and the same vital impulsion which actuates the supernatural action of man in the present and in the future kingdom of God. If, therefore, during this era we have not acquired the habitual communication in supernatural life as it is in God, we shall find ourselves after death incapable of understanding, enjoying, or even desiring the higher life of union with God in which the happiness of heaven consists. Without this propension of love or charity, all natural endowments, and virtues, and even the knowledge and belief in God are but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. We must have the infused facility and the acquired habits of divine love. Holy Communion is our chief means of participation in the divine life; it is the Sacrament of union, love and life.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE XIII.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES.

1.—PRUDENCE.

I. After the theological come the moral virtues, which are concerned with the conduct of man in this world as regards God, himself and his fellow-men. The first among these are the Cardinal Virtues, which enter into all the others, or constitute the necessary conditions, or, as it were, the atmosphere in which they act. These are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. They may exist in the natural form in any men; and brilliant examples of them were found among the cultivated heathen. But besides this, it is necessary that there should be a certain infused facility to enable them to be exercised in higher perfection and on supernatural objects. Prudence is a quality or virtue of the intelligence which guides our actions towards their object. It presides over our deliberations and decisions. It helps us to discern between good and evil, and to seek the one and avoid the other; it preserves us from excess or deficiency in our operations, it takes account of times and places, of aids and obstacles, and guides us accordingly. Prudence must control every other one of the virtues; it is like the salt which of old had to be used to season every sacrifice offered to God. Ask God to implant this ruling grace in you. "Give me wisdom that sitteth by Thy throne . . . that she may be with me and labour with me, that I may know what is acceptable with Thee" (Wisd. ix. 4, 10).

II. Prudence, when complete and efficient, involves a number of mental habits and actions. It includes the operation of the memory and intelligence in comparing different courses of action and deciding on them. It includes the virtue of docility, which excludes arrogant self-reliance and obstinacy, takes account of the opinions of others, and submits on due occasion to their guidance; zeal or eagerness in

doing good, with deliberateness and caution which exclude haste and rashness; impartiality in allowing due weight to all considerations, and in excluding selfish motives and unreasonable prejudices; decision and promptitude in arriving at conclusions and carrying them out; tenacity in adhering firmly to what has been resolved upon; patience in biding the time and waiting for the moment appointed by God, and not attempting to hasten it by taking extreme measures. Shortcomings in any one of these respects may seriously obstruct the work of God and even imperil one's own salvation and that of other souls. Great harm is often done by persons of high virtue and of the best intentions through some slight failing in prudence. How difficult it is to be watchful and perfect at so many points! How much harm you may do even by your good qualities unless God guide you and protect you against yourself! Distrust your talents, your virtues and your good intentions.

III. The infusion of supernatural prudence is necessary, not only for supernatural virtues, but also for many of the natural duties of life. And yet, how few think of guiding themselves by anything higher than the dictates of natural prudence. But Holy Writ tells us that "the wisdom of the flesh is death" (Rom. viii. 6); and God says "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject" (1 Cor. i. 19). This is what continually happens in human affairs. The prudence of the flesh overreaches itself. It knows that the violation of natural laws induces inevitable calamity; but it ignores the fact that natural and supernatural laws are harmonious; it commences by violating all divine principles of truth and morality, and then discovers that some natural law has been violated which brings unforeseen failure upon the best-laid plans. Be sure that "the learning of wickedness is not wisdom, and the device of sinners is not prudence" (Eccli. xix. 19). "Bless God at all times, and desire of Him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in Him" (Prov. iv. 20).

2.—TAKING COUNSEL.

I. "Lean not upon thine own prudence; . . . be not wise in thine own conceit" (Prov. iii. 5, 7). One important element in prudence is docility in taking counsel. No one is qualified to be judge in his own case; and this, which is true in natural affairs, is no less true in spiritual ones. Every one suffers at times from deficiency of information, or some failure of his faculties, or the impartiality of judgment is clouded by the unconscious intrusion of personal considerations. Points of view are numerous, and no one can grasp them all at once. The most self-reliant are the least qualified to judge alone; for the excess of self-reliance arises not from perfected capacity, but from inexperience, and from ignorance of personal deficiencies and external difficulties. Obstinacy increases with incapacity, and such pride is followed by a fall. The seeking of counsel is evidence of humility; and it is to the humble that God accords enlightenment and grace. How many troubles and catastrophes would be avoided if each remembered that he is not infallible and self-sufficing! "My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done" (Eccli. xxxii. 24).

II. God uses the instrumentality of His creatures for the accomplishment of His purposes, and He conveys His direction to us principally by means of other men. Moses, who spoke face to face with God and could consult Him at any moment in the Tabernacle, received with humility the counsel of Jethro who was not even of the chosen race. St. Paul had been converted by the voice of God Himself, yet he was made to submit himself to the hands of Ananias; he had been raised to the third heaven and had seen marvellous visions, yet he consulted with the Apostles as to his methods of action. God helps us directly with His grace, but He has appointed advisers whom we must consult in temporal and spiritual matters. The function of advising is com-

mitted chiefly to the Church which is "the pillar and the ground of truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15); also to parents, rulers, physicians, friends, who from their position or from their talents are evidently pointed out to us as worthy of our confidence, and endowed for our occasion with the gift of counsel. We must exercise much care in the selection of our advisers: "Be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counsellor" (Eccli. vi. 6). It falls to every one at some time to give counsel as well as to take it. Ask God in prayer to enlighten those from whom you seek advice, and to enlighten you for the benefit of those whom you advise. Help others in all sincerity and charity as being the minister of God to them; and show respect and confidence towards such as you have maturely chosen to be your advisers.

III. Great circumspection is required in the taking of counsel, on account of the multitude of false counsellors, and the plausible appearances with which they cover themselves. You must not trust the first that comes; but "try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1). Our protection against them must come from God and our own good principles. If our minds and souls be sound, and if we truly seek after justice, we shall find in ourselves an antidote to the poison of false counsellors, an instinct that will aid us to detect their deceptions. On those who do not conscientiously seek true wisdom the care of God in providing true counsellors is thrown away. They have a predilection for evil, a predisposition to catch at once the germs of the infection of falsehood. So it was that Roboam rejected the counsel of the elders for that of his depraved companions, and thereby rent the unity of the kingdom for ever. So it was that lying spirits entered into the prophets of King Achab and led him to destruction. Pray God to discredit the false prophets who mislead His people, and to reveal their wickedness.

3.—SINS AGAINST PRUDENCE.

I. Every sin that man can commit is contrary to the dictates of true natural and supernatural prudence; but some sins are formally opposed to prudence, not merely as disobeying it, but as destroying it. There are offences against prudence by way of deficiency, *viz.*, by the absence of some quality or action that is essential to perfect prudence. Such for instance would be, acting without due consideration, rashness and haste in execution, neglecting precautions, taking an important step while uncertain as to its lawfulness, anticipating the guidance of God by committing oneself blindly to a definite course, in order to escape somehow from the embarrassment of doubt and the weariness of waiting for enlightenment. Such also are carelessness and forgetfulness, indulging baseless prejudices without examining their foundations, remaining in a state of ignorance through fear of fuller knowledge or to avoid the trouble of investigation. Also indocility in following the suggestions of God as conveyed through one's own conscience or the advice of others; fickleness of mind is reconsidering a thing which has been decisively settled, and changing one's mind for trivial reasons. Consider how you habitually act in these different respects. See if you are prone to any of these forms of deficiency in prudence. Resolve to correct yourself, and solicit from God the infusion of this important virtue.

II. There are also contraventions of prudence by way of excess: that is to say, it is possible for us to do that which is substantially right, in a way that is irregular or excessive, through not taking account of the necessary limitations of even good actions. Thus St. Paul speaks of those who "have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge," and who in consequence "have not submitted themselves to the

justice of God" (Rom. x. 2, 3). Such was the zeal of the Apostles when they wished to call fire from heaven upon an offending city; and their Master said to them, "You know not of what spirit you are" (Luke ix. 55). The greatest crimes have at times been committed under a misguided or pretended zeal for liberty, learning, progress, country, religion, Scripture or God. An over-righteousness of this kind inspired the crimes of Scribes and Pharisees and chief-priests against the Son of God. They slew the living Word of God out of zeal for His written word and the glory of His temple. So also the prudence which is according to God is transgressed by an undue severity or an undue leniency, or by an injudicious exhibition of one's own virtue, or by a piety which makes itself obnoxious by exacting too much from the weakness of others. Take care that your virtues do not run to such extremes, and produce evil instead of good fruit.

III. A perversion or parody of divine prudence is found in that which is called the prudence of this world or prudence according to the flesh. This takes the form of an excessive solicitude about the things of this world or one's future prospects in life, instead of casting one's care upon the Lord. This is a prudence about worthless trifles and an imprudence as to one's best and permanent interests. Under its influence the great virtue of prudence degenerates into little more than animal cunning, and shows itself in greed, trickery, cruelty, irreligion. The more efficient this becomes in relation to individual interests, the more injurious it is to the larger natural interests of the community, and especially to those which are supernatural. Such prudence frustrates its own purposes, and proves itself in the long run to be fatal folly. The most honourable, unselfish Christian course of action will always prove to be, on the whole, the most prudent course, and will be justified by its results even in the natural sphere. Only "in Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10).

4.—JUSTICE.

I. Justice is the second of the fundamental moral virtues, and enters into all our relations with God and our fellow-men. The basis of harmonious intercourse between intelligent beings consists in rights and duties. The fact of our being intelligent and masters of ourselves involves the right to certain things that are for the welfare of our life, and the right to act according to our will, except so far as this may conflict with the rights of mastery in others. To each right corresponds a duty upon others to refrain from encroachments. God possesses supreme rights of independent action and of ownership over all things. Our first duty then is to respect those supreme rights. Men, too, have rights either as individuals or in their corporate capacity, but not as against God. Many of these rights are assigned by Nature, *i.e.*, by God as Author of the natural order; they accord with our natural needs, and so assert themselves spontaneously in us. All positive human law must respect these rights, and refrain from infringing them. Other rights rise out of the positive law of God, or are the creation of human law. Admire the moral and social harmony created by this system of rights and duties. Thank God for His wise dispositions. Remember that all rights rest on Him and are sacred; by respecting them you do homage to God and promote the general good order of the world.

II. The virtue which takes cognisance of rights and duties, and harmonizes the clash of contending interests is Justice. This virtue is so important, and enters so largely into all others, that its name is used as a general term that summarizes all virtues. Thus we are bidden to "accomplish all justice"; the commands of God are termed

His "justices"; and sinners, of whatever kind their sins may be, are spoken of as the "unjust." Justice is manifested primarily in God's dealings with His creatures. He renders to each all that is its due according to His will, and all that it requires for the aim and object that He has appointed for it; and if we look below the surface of things and beyond the narrow span of the present life, we shall see that there is not only equity but a substantial equality in the dealings of the Lord with men. The justice of God is the rule of our relations with Him and with men. We enjoy a certain participation in it as one of our natural propensities; but beyond this, we receive with sanctifying grace a further supernatural infusion of it to perfect the natural virtue and make it current in the spiritual sphere. Pray that this justice may be accomplished in you, that it may influence all your actions, and become a leading quality in your character.

III. There are many forms of Justice, in accordance with the variety of persons who have rights, and of the debts which we owe of our substance, services, words, thoughts, esteem, love. We have duties of justice towards God, our parents, our country, our rulers, brethren, inferiors, those whom we have wronged, and those who have offended against us. There are duties of justice also which we owe to ourselves in the securing of our legitimate rights. Our law is to "render to all men their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything" (Rom. xiii. 7, 8). Violations of justice are abominable to God, whether we filch from the holocaust that we offer to Him, or from our neighbours by fraudulent dealings or false weights and measures of any kind (Prov. xx. 10). Injustice is anti-social in a very high degree. Injustice breeds injustice, and retaliation, and loss of confidence, and loosens all social bonds. On the other hand, "The work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice quietness and security for ever" (Isa. xxxii. 17).

5.—THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION.

I. The sense of religion, or "Religion" said subjectively, is a virtue allied with justice, which renders to God that which is due to Him on account of His supreme excellence. It follows on faith in God as the Truth, and love of Him as Life; and its peculiar operation consists in worshipping Him as Lord and Ruler. There is in man a natural aptitude for this, which asserts itself indomitably in all, even in the most materialistic savages. The merely natural man knows only of the manifestation of God in Nature, and his religion quickly passes into Nature-worship and Pantheism. Man needs a specially infused aptitude in order to worship God as supernaturally manifested, and to accommodate himself to the laws and ordinances of objective revealed religion. Like the prophet he has to say, "A—a—a, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child" (Jer. i. 6); then the Lord touches his lips, and puts the words of the higher worship into his mouth. The infused virtue of Religion directs man in rendering to God the duties that He imposes both spiritual and material, those of the soul, and those that are associated with times, and places, and persons, and offerings, such as feast-days and temples, vows and sacrifices, the consecration of persons and the offering of tithes. Religion regulates the first of human relations, that which man has towards his Creator, it dictates the first of his duties, and thus it holds the first place among the moral virtues. Let God be the beginning of all things with you. Place His service before all other service. Let all your actions rest on Him and seek Him. Unless your life be well grounded on this foundation it will necessarily be a failure.

II. There are two spheres for the exercise of Religion, corresponding to the two departments of our being, the internal and the external, the soul and the body. Our religiousness must first of all be internal and spiritual. "God is a spirit; and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit

and in truth" (John iv. 24). Our worship must be grounded on intelligence and free-choice, for these are the principles that give a moral value to human actions. Without this worship of the soul, our service is no more than the blood of calves and goats which God rejects (Ps. xlix.); it is merely mechanical, and abominable to the Lord. But internal worship is not all. As man is constituted, he must express his sentiments in external forms of word and action; and these external forms serve to stimulate his inward sentiments, and impress immaterial truths upon his intelligence. Outward forms are specially necessary for collective worship, which is due to God as the homage of our corporate life, in addition to the homage that we owe as individuals. Outward forms have further been appointed by Christ as the symbols and channels of grace in His seven sacraments. Take care that you do not make your religion consist in faith and feeling alone, or in outward observances alone. Each is necessary, neither alone is complete.

III. As the Cardinal Virtues enter as factors into all our virtues, so Religion, as the highest exercise of Justice, must inspire every action so as to give it a supernatural value. Even those duties which regard our neighbours and ourselves in the natural sphere should be fulfilled as duties towards God as well; otherwise they end in the natural order, and are ineffective to please God and receive a reward in the supernatural order. Only in this manner can the service of man be considered as the service of God. Further, the religious sense is the originating cause of most of the virtues and acts of beneficence practised by men, and of every high principle that prevails in the world. Even those who profess to carry out such things on merely natural grounds of philanthropy or expedience without reference to religion, have nevertheless received these ideas as an inheritance from the ages of faith or have copied them from Christianity. Cultivate the sense of religion and duty to God; it will help you to fulfil all natural duties and give them a supernatural value.

6.—DEVOTION.

I. Devotion, or more correctly devotedness, is one of the first effects of the virtue of Religion. It is the desire to render God His due, it is a promptitude of the will to serve God, to endure all things in His service, and to avoid all that is hostile to Him; it is a fervent consecration of self to God, and a certain supernatural enthusiasm for Him. Hence Devotion is not to be considered as a mere tenderness residing in the sensitive nature, nor as an attachment to external practices. These two things may exist simultaneously with considerable carelessness about the divine law, or even with attachment to sin; they may be merely the expression of natural temperament, or the clinging to custom and habit. Real devotion or devotedness has a much larger range, and penetrates much more deeply; it is grounded on intellectual considerations, and operates upon the will as an incitement to practical action. Hence its scope is not limited to prayer and the worship of God, but extends to our whole life, and enters into all our virtues, giving us fervour, vigour and perseverance, elevating our hearts to God, and making our service of Him a reality. Take care that your service of God be not a matter of routine, perfunctory, languid, lifeless, ineffectual. Take care lest your good works be merely an outlet for natural energies. If your devotion be real, you will be equally ready to serve God in every capacity; but if your fervour extends only to those functions which are agreeable or honourable, you may know that the force which stimulates you is not devotion but human nature.

II. Consider the sources of Devotion. It does not depend on any peculiarities of natural character such as are present in some men and absent in others. It proceeds chiefly from God who infuses the supernatural virtues of Justice and Religion; but it depends in a secondary degree on us, and on our realizing to ourselves by deep consideration the great truths of faith. The thought of God, His perfections

and His works, and His claims on us; the thought of Jesus Our Lord, His life, His love, His death; the thought of our lowliness, and the service we owe to God; the thought also of the miseries of the world on account of its aversion from God, of the good that each of us can do, of the work that God assigns to us in counteracting these miseries, of the strength that He will give us for that work, of the power contained in prayer and good example—all this should be enough to move any one who is not utterly selfish and useless, to labour for God with thorough devotedness. Let the truths of religion be a reality to you, and a reality that leads to energetic action. Pray ardently for the gift of devotion, and it will be with you as with the wise man: "I wished and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me" (Wisd. vii. 7).

III. The effects of Devotion may be summed up as peace, joy and delight in the service of God, great hopefulness and trust in Him, alacrity and facility in all good works. Devotion also stimulates the natural energies, and engenders an enthusiasm which makes us ready for all things. It is true that devotion makes us more sensitive to the evils prevailing in the world, the horrible offences against God, and our own shortcomings; and that it will not allow us to enjoy the tranquillity of those who are contented with all the evils of life, so long as they affect only other people. But this sadness is that which God promises to turn into joy (John xvi. 20); and of which David spoke: "My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was delighted" (Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4). The supernatural vigour of devotion will bear you up against all depressing and enervating influences. The absence of it is the cause of much of the weariness, discouragement, disillusion, disgust, that prevail in the world. Serve God fervently and obey the command: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

7.—PRAYER IN GENERAL.

I. Prayer in its broadest sense includes almost all the actions that proceed from the virtue of Religion. It is, in general, the raising up of the mind and heart to God, or it is the approach of man to communication with Him. God has inclined Himself to us by creating us, and has followed this up by uniting His Son to humanity. Something more is required on our part to perfect the communication. Prayer completes the circuit, and establishes a direct and continual current of human action towards God, and of the divine action of grace towards us. God is the source of all the supernatural energy that works in us. This energy is ever ready to go forth in abundance, but it must wait for our action following on that of God, the action of prayer, which is an essential condition for the accomplishment of the divine operations in us. The first impulse of grace is from God, then prayer must intervene as the channel of the regular and continuous transmission of grace to us. Devotion, which proceeds from the virtue of Religion, finds one of its chief exercises in prayer. Prayer is one of the chief expressions of devotion, for it includes the recognition of God, aspiring to Him, rendering Him the homage of adoration and love, beseeching Him to bestow His gifts on us. This is one of the highest employments of the intelligence and will of man. It is specially distinctive of rational creatures; for although it prevails among the lowest races of men, there is no rudimentary form from which it can have been developed, in even the highest races of animals; and it is most effective in keeping man from reverting in life and morals to the animal type.

II. Consider the efficacy of prayer. It is not enough for us to have been placed on the supernatural path by God, but we require the continual influx of His grace every day

of our lives, for we remain strictly dependent on Him. Our supernatural duties are still absolutely beyond us, and even in the works of the natural order, we require to be helped against our tendency to error and to degeneration. God places the abundance of His treasures at our disposal, but prayer is the key that unlocks them. He gives us our daily bread, but we have to labour in the sweat of our brow before we can eat of it; prayer, like agriculture, is a necessary condition that must precede and prepare the harvest of graces which will support our supernatural and natural life. In prayer we have provision for all our necessities. Prayer places the omnipotence of God at our service. Prayer is the greatest source of energy in this world. To the man who besought Him for a miracle Our Lord said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark ix. 22). Be careful not to neglect so great salvation. You cannot employ your time more beneficially and more happily than in intercourse with God.

III. Prayer is an absolute necessity for us; it is in a sense our life; for it connects us as members with the central heart of all being, from which the throbs of supernatural life go forth. Without prayer we shall grow languid, become susceptible to any infection which is rife, and at last die a spiritual death. The Old Testament commands us to make prayer the chief occupation of our lives; this is the teaching of every one of the Sacred Books, the example given by every holy man. In the New Testament we have again the command and the example of Our Blessed Lord; and the Apostles enforce the lesson that we should pray without ceasing. As the earth for ever receives fertilizing rains and snows from heaven, and gives the moisture back in the form of imperceptible vapour, so we must act reciprocally with God, receiving graces and returning praise. Be assured that your happiness and success, strength to do, light to understand, fortitude to endure, can only come through prayer.

8.—WORSHIP.

I. The worship of God is the second kind of action in which the virtue of Religion takes form. God possesses the right of receiving from His creatures a homage proportioned, as far as may be, to His character. He merits a respect and service not only higher in degree but different in kind from any consideration which is shown towards creatures. Several things are comprised in supreme divine worship. 1. The perception of God's greatness and His supremacy over us; of our absolute insignificance, our dependence on Him, and of our profound obligations towards Him. 2. The willing acknowledgment of this by humble submission, by adoration, and by praising and glorifying God. 3. A formal act of worship generally includes the expression of our homage by some external sign. This is not always a matter of strict necessity, but the natural impulse of all men has been to render God the double homage of body and mind, and to express it outwardly by word of mouth, by bodily posture, or by dedicating special places and special times to divine worship. The fundamental idea in worship is to render God His due and to consecrate oneself to Him. The mind which does not do this is deformed, maimed and horrible, diverted from its proper purpose, and useless—the only useless thing in the great Universe—a blot in creation, a noxious influence obstructing the development of natural and supernatural life.

II. Besides the private worship which each one severally owes to God, the community should offer Him a common public and solemn worship. 1. Mankind form corporate unions which have a social life and action. That life proceeds from the Supreme Life and owes it homage accordingly, a social homage. Our Lord promises a special divine presence and influx to those who worship together in common, and an

additional efficacy to their prayers. The Church is the elevation of human society into a supernatural union for that purpose. It is appointed by Jesus Christ in order that there may be unity and harmony in accomplishing that great duty. 2. Public worship is also one of the means by which we confess Christ before men, and stamp ourselves as belonging to Him. The solemnities of external worship also react upon the soul; they concentrate the attention, they impress imagination, feeling and bodily sense into the service of God, so that men become more conscious of His presence and His greatness, and satisfy more fully the cravings and impulses of the religious sense. Even your private devotions have something of a public character. You pray for all men and not for yourself alone, and you derive benefit from the individual prayers of all members of the Church.

III. Associated with public worship is the duty of supporting it. This is prescribed equally by religion and by justice. It is a part of your social homage to God, and it is also returning an equivalent for services received. God enforced the duty of supporting religion on each of the faithful at a time when it might easily have been supported by other means. The Levites were left without their share in the inheritance of Israel, so that they might not be the sole supporters of religion, but that the whole community might individually bear their part in that duty. Thus men were taught that religious worship was the particular care of each one and not of a class only; and each one was required to give tangible evidence of his sincerity and of his appreciation of the gifts of God. You must therefore render to God the service of mind and heart and bodily homage, and also serve Him with your temporal substance in accordance with your position and your means. There is also a temporal debt of justice, often forgotten, which is due to those who serve the community in spiritual matters (Rom. xv. 27); as they preach the gospel they should be able to live by the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 11).

9.—THE PRAYER OF PETITION.

I. Religion, having expressed itself towards God in worship, next expresses itself in regard to ourselves. Adoration and gratitude are our duty to God; asking from God is our duty towards ourselves. This action is very generally spoken of as Prayer, in a special and limited sense. God is the supreme and only source of all good; from Him we must seek everything, and not from any creature. Prayer, strictly speaking, is addressed only to the Supreme Divinity. We pray to the Lord Jesus also as being true God of true God, but more commonly we pray through Him as being Man as well as God, and therefore our Mediator with the Godhead. His participation in human nature gives our prayers such merit as they have; and by Him only do we deserve to be heard. So we always pray through Him, and conclude every prayer with His name. It is our duty further to avail ourselves of the prayers of our brethren in addition to our own. Scripture teaches us to pray for one another and to ask their prayers. The prayer of the just avails much on earth; in heaven it is their function to present our petitions before the throne. In a subordinate sense we pray to the friends of God on earth and in heaven, that they consent with us concerning the thing that we ask, that it may be done to us by our Father in heaven (Matt. xviii. 19). The one kind of prayer is supreme worship of God; the other is the deference paid to those who are nearer to God than ourselves. Petition is an important duty. Always ask much of God. He is honoured by our petitions, and delights in granting them.

II. The first object of our prayer should be our own spiritual necessities. That supernatural instrument should be in the first instance devoted to supernatural purposes; under this condition its effect is infallible according to Our Lord's promise. We begin with ourselves; for the first duty of each one is to glorify God by his own salvation; his own soul is the first and principal charge committed to him

by God. We should ask unceasingly for light and truth, grace and strength, the accomplishment of God's will, and our eternal salvation. But we are allowed also to solicit the assistance and the intervention of God in our temporal necessities. Our Lord when on earth often addressed Himself to the Father, and employed His own divine power for the bodily relief and comfort of men, as in feeding the hungry and healing the sick. We may ask for such favours; but we must remember to do so subordinately to our spiritual welfare; we must ask conditionally, "if it be possible"; and we must not expect that we shall infallibly have our petition granted. We often know not what we ask, so that God refuses us in His mercy, and gives effect to our prayers in some other way. In such petitions say always, "Not my will but Thine be done." We are also bound to pray for other men. Hence your prayers must be accompanied with confidence if they are for spiritual objects, with resignation when for temporal objects, with charity in praying constantly for others.

III. Consider the various conditions laid down for our guidance in prayer. Sometimes "you have not because you ask not," and again "you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss" (Jas. iv. 2, 3). You must be full of faith in the promises of God, and of confidence in being heard; otherwise you can expect nothing. You must pray always; your desires must be habitual and your petitions frequent. It is necessary also to persevere even with importunity, as Our Lord teaches. You must not be content with asking once; you may have to continue for years. Do not grow weary or discouraged if God test your patience and confidence by making you wait, or if even He refuse your petition, as He refused to deliver St. Paul from his temptations; for prayer cannot go to waste, it produces its effect in some other way. Let prayer be your constant occupation and delight. "Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 16).

10.—INTERCESSION.

I. "Pray for one another that you may be saved" (Jas. v. 16). Intercommunion throughout the earth is now so close on account of commercial relations and instant communication, that any great event in one country produces an immediate effect upon thousands in the most remote parts of the world. If it be a calamity, there is an outburst of sympathy and aid in every land. The three portions of the Kingdom of Christ, the Militant, the Triumphant and the Suffering, form one great corporate union in Him. The bond between them is not fanciful or figurative but real; and this consists in actual communication of reciprocal action from each towards the others. That action is a spiritual one, and consists chiefly in interceding for each other or asking intercession, "that you may be saved." No one lives for himself alone in the temporal order except those who are the enemies of their species; and still more in the supernatural order is this the case. The bond of union is to be kept up by bearing one another's burdens, and this is done by intercession. The blessed intercede for us, we intercede for the souls in purgatory; and Jesus Christ is the centre where all these influences meet and whence they radiate. Practise regularly this form of the prayer of petition. Exhibit in the spiritual order the same diffusive charity which you have to show in the temporal order. Pray for your brethren that they may be saved; they will pray for you that you may be saved.

II. The duty of intercession for one another is to be learned from Our Blessed Lord. There is not one of His actions or His functions that is not intended as a model for us. He acted not as God alone, not as unapproachable and inimitable, but as Son of Man, so that we can unite in all His actions. We are all sons of God with Him, we are all priests with Him, uniting in the oblation of the same

sacrifice, we shall all one day be kings with Him and heirs to heaven. As He is the Saviour and Mediator, we too must forward the salvation of souls and mediate for them by prayer in union with Him. In the Old Testament we find Moses interceding for the people and saving them from the consequences of their sins. The friends of Job were commanded by God to invoke his mediation against the divine wrath. The elders of Israel said to Judith, "Now, therefore, pray for us, for thou art a holy woman and one fearing God" (Jud. viii. 29). The Apostles also carried out the imitation of their Master by recommending, and even themselves asking, the intercession of the faithful. Do not neglect this duty. You will be wanting in humility if you disdain to ask the prayers of others, you will be wanting in charity if you do not intercede for them.

III. We gather from Holy Scripture that the activity of the blessed in heaven and their function of utility in the universe consists, for one thing, in offering prayers for us before the throne. So an angel came with "much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar" (Apoc. viii. 3). The four and twenty ancients also offered "golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of the saints" (Apoc. v. 8). Such, doubtless, will be your office when you have passed into God's kingdom. You will live the same supernatural life as now, you will be interested in the work of God on earth, and will have some useful ministry in the higher sphere in continuation of that which has fallen to you now. The great source of spiritual energy on earth, which is prayer and intercession, is also the source of such spiritual utility as the Angels and Saints, and above all the Blessed Mother of Jesus, now exercise from their thrones in heaven, and which you will exercise in due course. Take care to keep yourself in active communication with every part of God's kingdom by means of intercession, which is the universal net-work that binds it all together.

11.—MEDITATION.

I. Meditation, also called Mental Prayer, is a system of spiritual discipline for the soul. It includes the conveyance of divine truths to the intelligence, the development of these in their practical aspects as guides for action, the prayer of worship and petition, and the stimulation of the affections towards God, and the executive faculties towards the practice of virtue. This exercise, if it is to be effectual, must be carried out regularly and systematically, and a fixed daily interval must be given up to it. The effect of meditation is to make the great supernatural truths perfectly familiar to the mind in all their bearings, to keep the soul constantly raised towards God, and prevent it from becoming absorbed in earthly things and lowered to their level. All the faculties in due order are exercised upon supernatural action; human weaknesses and the consequent perils are discovered; shortcomings are detected by self-examination before they have grown inveterate, and new ways of serving God are discovered. In meditation the soul is not merely receptive, as in reading or hearing, but it has to act for itself, endeavouring to fathom the deep mysteries of divine truths, and discover new applications of them as its condition may require; as to affections and petitions, the mind ranges through a much larger scale than when it prays in words composed by others. Meditation does not supplant those other exercises of devotion; it employs them all, and supplements them by deep consideration. Such an excellent exercise ought to be carefully studied and regularly carried out.

II. Consideration of this kind is very important for the nourishment of the Christian life in all men. In default of the regular practice of it, its place ought to be supplied in some other more simple way. The words of God require to be masticated, and digested, and transfused through every part of the spiritual frame. The assimilation of

truth proceeds thus. First, truths are expressed in words and formulas which are conveyed to the sense-memory; these can be reproduced again, and pronounced with a certain appropriateness, yet without always being comprehended. There are many who never get beyond this stage. A second step, by no means involved in the first, is to convey the meaning of these formulas to the intelligence; yet this is by no means sufficient; the evil spirits have such knowledge and they do not profit by it, and it is possible for men to resist the known truth. Divine truths need further to be appreciated, desired and loved; the emotions and enthusiasm should be exercised upon them. Finally, it is necessary that the will should determine to carry them into practical effect. Meditation is the regular means to this end; without it or its equivalent, instruction is no more than a sense-impression, knowledge is vain and puffeth up, and good desires remain unfruitful.

III. "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer. xii. 11). Some have no knowledge because they will not seek it, others acquire just so much knowledge as enables them to invent excuses for disbelief, and as makes them without excuse before God. Others have knowledge without faith; others again have the faith, and even value it highly, but they wrap their talent in a napkin and bury it; they do not make it effectual in their lives. Ignorance is one great source of evil in the world; a still greater one is the want of reflection. There are abundant means of ascertaining truth, especially in an era of cultivation like the present. God speaks to every soul in ways that are suited to it, and He illumines every man that cometh into this world. But the distractions of this life prevent sober reflection, and the truths of faith first become obscured and then are lost; and then follows dissolution of manners, and lastly punishment. Meditation is the preservative against these evils.

12.—VOWS.

I. A vow is a voluntary promise made to God, and a new obligation which a person imposes on himself to do some good action. In addition to all that is prescribed by the natural law and by the statute law of God in the Old and New Testament, we have the power of creating a new law or obligation for ourselves in honour of God, just as we have the power to bind ourselves by contract in secular matters to do certain services or to forego certain rights. A vow gives an additional character of sanctity to a good action. It is one of the chief classes of service which fall under the virtue of Religion. The act therefore which is vowed becomes doubly virtuous ; it has its own character of patience, or generosity, or obedience, and it has the acquired character of an act of religion. Vows hold an important position in the religious systems of the Old and New Dispensations. Special regulations concerning their observance were laid down by the law of Moses, and we find the practice confirmed by the example of the Apostles under the New Law. Such a promise is a most sacred kind of contract. In Scripture we read that "It is ruin to a man . . . after vows to retract" (Prov. xx. 25). And again, "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it, because the Lord thy God will require it" (Deut. xxiii. 21). Be careful about the promises you make to God. Do not make them lightly ; fulfil them exactly.

II. The good actions promised under vow are generally things which are not already of obligation, they are works of supererogation, or they belong to those classes of acts which God only *counsels* as being acceptable to Him, and which are not necessary precepts binding on all men. Such a vow is an offering of something which is our own, which we are free to keep for ourselves. Thereby we can be

generous towards God, we can bestow a gift on Him who possesses all things, and we can make some small return to God for His immense bounty to us. Vows have a further advantage and merit when they impose an obligation that is to last for many years. They anticipate time, and in one instant they dedicate to God the service of a long period, and to some extent gain the merit of it in advance. It may truly in such a case be said: "being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time" (Wisd. iv. 13). And then if death cut short the duration of the promised service, God accepts the desire for the fact; "if the will be forward it is accepted according to that which it hath, not according to that which it hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). Rejoice that God has so many faithful servants who render Him such generous homage. Especially rejoice if He has given you such opportunities.

III. The most notable vows are those of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, which consecrate to God one's possessions, independence and life. These are the great victory of grace over the material tendencies of nature; they are the counterpoise to the three great influences that rule the world—the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life; they avenge the primeval fall, they transform human nature into the living image of the Son of God, and raise a portion of mankind to a condition which rivals in splendour the state of unfallen man. These highest practices of the virtue of religion became possible only when Christ Our Lord had Himself given the example, and poured forth more abundant graces on the world; even now they are possible only to the select few whom He has called to be examples of the highest spiritual possibilities. Only the best are capable of the absolute devotedness which these vows involve, of stern determination, perfect mastery over self, full liberty of will, unswerving courage, the life of faith, and tenacity unto death.

13.—VIRTUES ALLIED TO JUSTICE. 1.

I. The Cardinal virtue of Justice consists in rendering to each and all their rightful due; so that it has a much wider scope than regulating business transactions, punishing crimes, and granting political rights; it enters into all our relations with God and our neighbours, and becomes a constituent part of many virtues. The first of these virtues is *Filial piety;* for on the second table of the law, which deals with the relations of men amongst themselves, the first commandment is "Honour thy father and thy mother." The family is the earliest community and is the unit of human society; its duties are the basis of all other social duties, and the observance of them brings with it a train of temporal benefits. The consequence of filial piety is "that it may be well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God will give thee" (Deut. v. 16). Filial piety is not fitting, admirable and beautiful only, but it is a debt of natural justice due to parents in return for the gift of life, and for their cares in supporting and educating. It includes love, respect, obedience, and when occasion arises, temporal assistance. Men owe a duty of the same kind to their country. The words fatherland, mother-country, patriotism, indicate that our native country bears something of a parental relation towards us, and is entitled to love, respect and service accordingly. Esteem this virtue, practise it, and promote its observance.

II. Next to filial piety comes *Respect for authority.* Parents are not our only superiors nor the only representatives of the ruling power of God. Every man differs from every other, as in physical features, so in mental gifts and powers. Hence the necessary inequalities which are at the root of variety and harmony, and which are the foundation of an ordered hierarchy of beings. Any personal excellence

of goodness or talent is a manifestation of divine perfections, and is therefore deserving of admiration and respect. This excellence often results in creating some pre-eminence of position, or in giving some authority or power over other men. The good order of society requires that men should admit these inequalities, and show respect to any superiority in others. Some men have come in the course of events to be the representatives of God in the civil order and others in the religious order. Some have a natural force of character, and have made themselves a high position, or have been elected to it by others. Some have the authority of genius and knowledge, others of good deeds and holiness; and many others merit respect for their grey hairs, or their misfortunes, or their poverty. Take care to render to all their due meed of respect, for such is the will of God.

III. *Obedience* is the practical form in which respect for authority shows itself. There is no combination of action without direction from some authority and obedience from the many. The authority of God implies command and obedience; and it is the same with the authority which God has delegated to men. Obedience is necessary for social order and progress: without it, communities of men would be like hordes of wild beasts. There is no one in any position who does not owe obedience in some form to persons or laws; and there is no one who has not at some time a claim to the obedience of others. It is the interest of all to obey. The submission of each one to authority is the confirmation of his own authority. No one is qualified to rule except those who have learnt to obey. The submission of obedience is not a sacrifice of freedom and dignity, if we obey as free beings, willingly and from a sense of principle. Such is the obedience of the Christian to his Church. This is the true independence of mind, and not that which obeys only from fear of punishment, and which scoffs at all authority that does not bear the sword. Imitate the mirror of all justice, Jesus Christ, who was obedient even unto death.

14.—VIRTUES ALLIED TO JUSTICE. 2.

I. *Gratitude* is a debt that is due in justice for favours bestowed gratuitously. Action and reaction are equal; and beneficence should produce its reaction in kindly feeling, thanksgiving, and a return of good offices. This debt of justice is due principally to God on account of the immensity and absolute gratuitousness of His gifts, and also to those of our brethren who have done us any service. At all times and among all men the virtue of gratitude has been highly esteemed; and ingratitude has been regarded as a peculiarly disgraceful vice, as contrary to the primary instincts of nature, and as a sign of a mean and contemptible character. There are few of the beasts even that are insensible to this emotion. Yet there are some men who are abnormally sensitive to the smallest slight or sign of wrong done to them, and are eager to do themselves justice, as they account it, by revenge; and at the same time they can receive favours, without thinking of the justice which requires at least an acknowledgment of them, and remembrance and requital. Such is the attitude which many take up towards their Supreme Lover and Benefactor. The talents they have received they turn against the Giver. His mercy they insult, because they think they can do so with impunity. They have received nothing but kindness, and they requite it with hatred and rebellion, because they are invited to lives of holiness and restraint. There is nothing more degraded and horrible on earth.

II. Another virtue is that of *veracity* and *sincerity*. This is required of men in their dealings one with another, not only in imitation of the Truth of God, but also as a debt of justice to our fellow-men, which they have a right to expect of us. This is a service which is necessary for social life, and therefore each is bound to render it. In order that each one may help and be helped, in order that the numer-

ous wheels of the machine may work in correspondence with one another, there must be security in action arising from trust and confidence in other men. It is a duty to God, and to society, and to each person that men should show the reality of things and of their own sentiments as they are. Concealment, hypocrisy, pretences, lying, fraud, insincerity, are all so many obstacles to the current of free communication and progress; they constitute a state of warfare instead of reciprocal helpfulness between men; and energies which ought to be productive are squandered in neutralizing other energies, in watching and circumventing, and in warding off dangers which ought not to exist. These injustices thwart their own object; devised for personal advantage, they injure the community and all who practise them. Do your best to raise the degraded tone of the world by rigid integrity and candour.

III. *Kindliness* is a virtue both of inward dispositions and of outward demeanour; it is the reality which underlies the forms of politeness, and is the expression of united respect and charity. Kindliness is the small change of Christian intercourse: it is one of the lesser virtues, but it is in more constant requisition than many nobler ones, and does more perhaps to make the wheels of life run easily. It is at least as important for extending the work of God on earth as power and splendid abilities in speech and action. Thus it is like the small coinage of a country, which is a matter of convenience rather than of wealth, and yet is required in order to make wealth tractable. This was one of the distinctive characteristics of Our Lord; He was meek and humble of heart, sweet and mild towards all, full of charm of manner, consideration and compassion; and thus He conciliated hearts more than by His divine dignity, irresistible speech, and miraculous power. Practise this virtue, not as a matter of temperament or convenience, but as a duty of justice incumbent on all members of human society.

15.—VIRTUES ALLIED TO JUSTICE. 3.

I. Justice and generosity are different virtues, and are frequently regarded as opposites; yet *Liberality*, though not prescribed by statute law is still a duty of natural and of Christian justice. This is specially a duty incumbent on those who have received an abundance of this world's goods. The products of the earth, the mother of all, are intended primarily for the support of the life of all in a suitable manner. If, in the natural course, wealth accumulates largely in individual hands, it should be used with a sense of responsibility to the community and to God. Through the organization and self-restraint of the community, some receive more than the share of the earth's productions which their labours have earned, and are enabled to enjoy it in security. They in turn should render service to the community in proportion to their privileges. If they insist on their personal rights and rigid legal claims, they are guilty of an offence which is not the less real because it is not punished by the law. Wealth should not be hoarded for private advantage, but should benefit the whole community. It should be like the waters of the earth, which flow by ten thousand channels into the accumulation of the ocean, and are given back to the earth in the form of vapour and rain. For the accomplishment of this justice it is absolutely necessary that economical principles and civil laws should be supplemented by the Christian law of Liberality. Without this, the operation of natural forces turns law and social order into an engine for the oppression of the poor, and weak, and ignorant multitudes who are the bulk of human society.

II. *Sternness* and rigour are qualities of justice which regard the due apportionment of punishment. It is in accordance with the law of nature and of revelation that evil doings should produce evil consequences. As men are constituted, some severity is necessary in order to deter from crime and protect the community. To depart from

this is an offence against mercy no less than against justice, for it encourages criminals to new excesses of cruelty against their victims. Weakness is not the same as the divine quality of mercy. The *soi-disant* tenderness towards wrong-doers sometimes results from effeminacy of sentiment, sometimes from indifference to the wrongs which others suffer, sometimes from a positive sympathy with crime itself. Consider the harmonies of the universe as shown in the equal balance of expiation and offence; and the justice of God in the punishment of sin. Tenderness and sternness are not inconsistent qualities in God. So you must not allow an undue straining after mercy to make you forget that justice also is a divine perfection which must be reproduced on earth. Outside the influence of religion we often find sternness replaced by brutal severity, and mercy parodied by a weakness which is fatal to justice.

III. Perfect justice requires that the rigour of justice be constantly modified. Rights pushed to their extreme often become wrongs. The strict letter of the law needs to be tempered by *Equity*. Without this benignity of interpretation, inflexible law sometimes inflicts worse evils than those which it is intended to remedy. We have to be careful lest we injure the more valuable thing, the souls of men, while guarding that which is less valuable, their material rights. The Holy Ghost cautions us: "Be not over just; and be not more wise than is necessary" (Eccles. vii. 17). Apply these principles to the private judgments that you form about the conduct of others. If you would judge truly, judge leniently. If you judge others according to the strict letter of the spiritual law, you will generally be wrong and always uncharitable. There are excuses of involuntary ignorance, of mistaken good intentions, of tangled influences, which you cannot trace, but for which the merciful judgment of God makes most generous allowance. Beware especially of that most dangerous injustice of passing severe sentence on others and a lenient one on your own greater offences.

16.—FORTITUDE.

I. The virtue of Fortitude combines in itself a number of admirable qualities, strength, vigour, endurance, intrepidity, self-sacrifice. It is a virtue that is required in all circumstances of difficulty or discouragement; and therefore it must be constantly employed in the exercise of every virtue. It is thus a Cardinal Virtue and a constituent of the spiritual atmosphere in which all our actions are performed. Consider how much we need it. Life is a long struggle between the forces of good and evil both within us and without us. We have a certain innate attraction towards evil, circumstances incline us to it, obstacles in the way of goodness are many and great. In addition we are weak and inconstant and easily cast down. We want some special help against ourselves and our external enemies, a source of strength that we can draw upon on critical and unexpected occasions. Without this we shall be utterly incapable; our natural fortitude is insufficient for the conflicts of the supernatural life; we shall faint on the way, and fail to accomplish the great purpose of our lives. God grants us the infused virtue of Fortitude; and by means of it the weakest have become strong enough to do the work of heroes, and to triumph over the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Consider your timidity, easiness of temper, shrinking from suffering, incapacity for sustained effort, readiness to be misled, and ask God to endow you with this wonderful gift.

II. Consider Our Lord's life. With all His meekness and humility, His going like a lamb to the slaughter, and His submission to a human weakness at the grave of Lazarus and in Gethsemani, His whole life was marked by indomitable energy, indifference to danger, intrepid courage. There is no note of soft melancholy in His sorrows, no lack of decision in critical junctures, no sign of breaking down in

His terrible task. He faced His enemies day by day, He spoke His mind without concealment, He carried out His work without regard to consequences. He was silent before His judges, but He did not quail before them. As a criminal sentenced to execution, He spoke before Caiphas and Pilate, to the women of Jerusalem and the thief on the cross, with the calm authority of Judge of the living and the dead. Fortitude is the note of the chief followers of Christ, of Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, even women and children. They first overcame weakness and passion, and then they triumphed over persecution and death. Imitate this. Train yourself to fortitude in your own soul on the ordinary occasions of life, and then you will be capable of great deeds if God should demand them of you.

III. The supreme exhibition of Fortitude is the endurance of martyrdom for the sake of Christ. The tortures and ignominies inflicted on the noblest children of the Church and the losses she has suffered in their death, are to her not memories of bitterness but of glory. The continual advance and undying strength of religion are due under God to the spirit of martyrdom that is for ever vigorous. The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. Unceasing persecution is one chief condition of her life. It causes the weak and decadent members to drop off, it elicits all the active virtues of the strong, it turns into supernatural channels the energies which otherwise might be expended on natural objects, it encourages the wavering by the sight of glorious deeds, and it purchases triumphs for God and truth at the price of blood. Few are called upon to face the quick pang of death for Christ; but many have to suffer the less brilliant but perhaps more meritorious martyrdom of life, with its longer agony, and its constant sting of petty annoyance, of cruel spite, contempt and calumny. Such in some measure must be the lot of all in every class of life, who are faithful to conscience and God. Pray for those so tried that they may come forth purified from the furnace.

17.—VIRTUES ALLIED TO FORTITUDE.

I. *Magnanimity* is a virtue by which men aspire to great things, form great designs, and carry them out with spirit and success. This rare and admirable virtue is closely allied to Fortitude. In the natural order there are few really great souls. Gigantic figures stand out here and there in history, men of brilliant intelligence or of wonderful achievements, god-like in some respects, who have however in other respects proved themselves to be mean, or sensual, or vile, or contemptible. True Christian souls are always magnanimous. Their infused virtues cause them to aspire to the sublimest heights, to heaven and to God; and they cannot lower themselves to unworthy objects, or use any disgraceful methods. There are many such, who perform the noblest deeds of beneficence and abnegation without a suspicion of their grandeur, without self-consciousness or self-advertisement, never seeking the applause of men and seldom finding it. There are many others full of magnanimous desires and capable of carrying them out, but God does not require such service from them. He is glorified however by having such ministers of His will ready at hand; they are not without their uses in the kingdom of God, and they will be rewarded according to their aspirations as if they had really achieved. Seek always the highest ideal; do always what is most perfect before God; do not trouble yourself about trifles; indulge no selfish motives; and do not degrade a noble aim by seeking to attain it by any unworthy methods.

II. *Patient Endurance* is an exercise of Fortitude which enables us to bear up against the depression of misfortune and suffering. The courage which confronts approaching evils changes into patience when they have arrived. It does

not deprive us of natural feeling, but keeps it within bounds. So our Lord in Gethsemani felt the natural impulse to avoid suffering, but He subdued it sternly and said "Not My will but Thine be done." No one can endure with dignity and joy but those who have learnt from Christ Our Lord. Nature supplies no motives for patience; it offers no compensation for injustice, poverty and other inequalities, to one who knows of nothing beyond this life. Faith in God and hope of heaven are the only real sources of patience. As faith and religion fail, men grow incapable of sustaining the ills of life; they are embittered by discontent, exhausted by vain struggles, and they seek oblivion in intemperance or suicide. Regard suffering as the punishment and the remedy for sin, as a meritorious service of God, a means of sanctification, and the price to be paid for God's favour and eternal life. Some are turned by it away from God; let it turn you to Him.

III. *Perseverance* is a very important form of Fortitude. The mere length of time constitutes a serious difficulty in working out our salvation. While the struggle of virtue may become a habit with us, it may also become a weariness and a monotony, making us desire a change if even for the worse. The prospect of labour and suffering for an indefinite future brings discouragement and apprehensions of failure. Our gift of foresight, when turned upon coming evils, causes them all to be accumulated on us in the present, by the expectation which multiplies them and makes them seem worse than the reality will ever be. The natural fortitude of man is very liable to fail under this tension. We need a gift which will inspire us with constant hopefulness and strength to go on day after day, recovering from our falls and putting forth ever new energies. We must look to God for this, and we shall receive it in the infused habit of Fortitude. Pray that you may not be of those who begin well, and suddenly break down irrecoverably.

18.—TEMPERANCE.

I. Temperance, considered as a Cardinal Virtue, is a general habit of self-restraint, the moderation of all the faculties, and the avoidance of extremes even in the practice of virtue. In every matter true virtue is the golden mean between too much and too little. Our inherited tendency to disorder makes us always liable to go too far in one direction or the other; and we are so blind that we easily mistake the excess for the virtue. A sense of moderation is involved in the practice of every virtue. If there be any deficiency in it, our actual good qualities take irregular forms and become tainted with imperfection, we give scandal and think it to be good example, and our most cherished virtues are recognized by observers to be no more than disguised vices. Even in regard to the great virtue of wisdom, the Apostle thinks it necessary to caution us "not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety" (Rom. xii. 3). It is peculiarly sad to see great gifts rendered useless by a want of moderation, and to see good intentions producing a crop of evils. Is this the case with you? Do you mistake temper for zeal, tyranny for authority, weakness for meekness, insolence for self-respect, buffoonery for geniality, timidity for prudence? Ask God to infuse into you the habit of moderation so that in all things you may know how far to go and when to stop, how much God expects of you, and how much you are to expect from others.

II. The more definite scope of Temperance is to moderate the impulses of natural vitality when they are prejudicial to our supernatural life. These impulses have their uses, and are necessary for the maintenance of our animal existence; but we have also a life on a higher plane, social life, intellectual life, spiritual life. On account of the fall, these

no longer act harmoniously one with the other, the lower impulses rebel against the higher law, and tend to injurious excess. Reason is able to perceive the dangers and the degradation that result from physical excesses, and the injury they do to social life; but, unlike instinct in animals, it does not supply the strength to restrain all such excess. The qualities which constitute the strength of the physical life become a source of weakness to the intellectual and social life. It is necessary that the weakest points in the human mechanism should be specially strengthened in view of the supernatural life; and reason is aided to do this by means of the infused virtue of Temperance. Your natural energies are like unruly horses: a firm hand and a strong curb are needed to keep them within the limits of utility, and prevent them from hurrying you to destruction.

III. Consider the external objects of the virtue of Temperance. While Fortitude surmounts the difficulties which arise from opposition and suffering, Temperance deals with those which spring from the beguilements of pleasure and the delights of this mundane life. Pleasure has its just place in the economy of our lives; it directs us towards certain duties and testifies to their accomplishment. The tendency of human nature, however, is to dwell on the immediate gratification of sense, to make it the end of all endeavour, and to forget that its ultimate purpose is to subserve our bodily well-being in order to the promotion of the higher stages of human life. Inordinate indulgence in the pleasures of sense interferes with the efficiency of the intelligence, weakens the mastery of the will, and obscures the spiritual vision. "The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth on many things" (Wisd. ix. 15). Remember the uses of pleasure and recreation, and do not esteem them as the object of existence on earth. Enjoy them in due moderation, and always with a view to God's glory.

19.—SOBRIETY.

I. The general term Temperance has come to be applied to one specific form of moderation, which properly is called Sobriety and abstinence from food. One of the first and most obvious duties of our temporal life is to maintain it by means of constant supplies of meat and drink; it is the first of physical appetites, and is exposed to the danger of very noxious excess. The virtue of Sobriety is the form of Temperance which regulates the use of bodily nourishment. All things should be used for their proper purposes and not distorted to others; and it should be always borne in mind that the object of food is not the pleasure which comes from the gratification of the palate, but the maintenance of the body in a fit condition for its duties. We should eat in order to live, and not live in order to eat and drink. The virtue of Sobriety commands us equally to take a sufficiency of food and to abstain from an excess of it. If we offend against this virtue in either way, we are doing a physical injury to an instrument of the service of God, and committing a moral wrong. Sobriety is more frequently violated by excess than by defect. There are some "whose god is their belly" (Phil. iii. 19), and who arrange their lives, and employ their thoughts, and squander their substance, and sacrifice their eternal happiness, for the transient pleasures of the table. Inordinate appetite turns the means of maintaining life into an instrument for impairing and destroying it. Never commit such folly. "Take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness" (Luke xxi. 34).

II. The physical appetites are not by themselves sufficient guides for human conduct. They continually demand more than they properly need; and it is necessary that they should be regulated by principles drawn from the higher

faculties. The appetites are not a law unto themselves as they are in the lower animals, but their law is to be found in reason enlightened by natural and supernatural guidance. Many have no other rule of life than to grant every demand of the physical appetites. It is a fatal rule, and the results show that abstinence and sobriety are a condition of health and life. Insobriety in its various forms has slain more than the sword, it has inflicted more suffering than any of the natural calamities of life, it opens the way to excesses of every other kind, and its effects pass on from generation to generation by the transmission of a vitiated constitution and an inherited aptitude for sin. Insobriety induces a grossness of body and mind which incapacitates the soul for spiritual things, and becomes a fertile source of irreligion. "When they have eaten, and are full and fat, they will turn away after strange gods . . . and will despise Me and make void My covenant" (Deut. xxxi. 20). Therefore when you eat or drink do all for the glory of God.

III. God has appointed formal acts of religion which consecrate the practice of sobriety, and habituate us to self-restraint in the matter of food. The Law, the Prophets and the Gospel have been followed by almost every system that can be called a religion, in prescribing days of fasting and abstinence. Moses, Elias and the Lord Jesus observed the fast of forty days which has become the law of Christendom; and the day of Christ's death is commemorated every week by abstinence from meat. These observances are a discipline for body and soul; they interpose repeated checks on the physical appetite, and remind us of the necessity of self-restraint; they help to keep down the insurgence of the body against the soul, and to ensure the dominance of reason and will on other occasions when the natural enters into conflict with the supernatural. Practise the virtue of sobriety, not only by refraining from excess, but by self-denial as to pleasures which are lawful, and by offering to God such satisfaction as you feel in them.

20.—CHASTITY.

I. The second chief manifestation of the virtue of Temperance is Chastity. The first one regulates the maintenance of life in the individual, this regulates its maintenance in the species. The species is of more importance in the universe than the individual, and the natural impulses which regard specific life are therefore the more important and the more forcible. Like all other impulses, these too may be perverted from their proper use so as to frustrate their natural aim, and transmute themselves into vices hostile to man's natural and spiritual evolution. If this be the case, the injury which they produce must be proportioned to their importance and their energy. Thus the primary forces of life generate the most powerful, prevalent and fatal vices, if they be released from the moderating influences of instinct, reason and grace. The law of nature is in itself wholesome, constructive and progressive. The impulses of sense are only one factor in that law; and if they be taken as the sole one, to the exclusion of those factors which are supplied by the higher faculties, the effect will be disintegrating and fatal to individual life, physical and mental, to family life, social life, national life. The deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, the extermination of the Canaanites, the putrefaction of great nations in ancient and modern times, in fine the greatest part of human calamities on earth and in hell are due chiefly to the fact that "all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 12). Chastity, in restraining these evils, is the source of the greatest earthly blessings. "As for him who is pure, his work is right" (Prov. xxi. 8).

II. In its spiritual aspect Chastity is the most brilliant, beautiful and angelic of virtues. The voice of God has said: "Oh how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! For the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known

both with God and with men" (Wisd. iv. 1). The Most Holy delights in pure souls and manifests Himself to them: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). Wholesomeness of the physical life is the necessary basis of that higher life which is in God, for "wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wisd. i. 4). An unchaste race is physically as well as spiritually decadent; it is like the rotten skin-bottles which cannot contain strong wine—the conception of the Most Holy, the religious sense, or any high moral perceptions. This vice is the chief cause of the hatred of religion and of God's faithful servants, "They think it strange that you run not with them into the same confusion of riotousness, speaking ill of you" (1 Pet. iv. 4). As things are, Chastity is practically the touchstone between the followers of Christ and of Satan.

III. This virtue, so elevated above man's fallen state, and so necessary for our natural and supernatural welfare, is difficult of attainment; and to those who abjure the supernatural life, it is incomprehensible and well-nigh impossible. So Solomon says: "I knew I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it" (Wisd. viii. 21). This high spiritual ideal is not beyond the power of men when helped by grace; the supernatural law is not the abrogation of natural law but its perfection. God has not given man impossible commands; and if they are difficult, He gives a grace that corresponds to them by its efficacy. This is contained in the infused virtue of Temperance, which is given to all who enter the state of grace; and thus, that which is impossible to man becomes possible when God acts in him. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us" (2 Cor. iv. 7). All care is needed for its preservation. Lead the life of the Spirit and not of the flesh. Live now in such a way that you may be a fit companion of the angels and of the God of perfect holiness.

21.—CELIBACY.

I. Religious Celibacy and Virginity may be called the apotheosis of Chastity, which thus is raised to its highest term, and becomes absolute and permanent. Chastity, from being the guide and moderator of natural activity, rises to the highest self-abnegation, and establishes the dominance of the spiritual over the material element in human nature. The maintenance of the specific life is indeed a primary law of nature; yet nature itself always provides checks on a too abundant multiplication. God has provided one in the case of man that is proportioned to his dignity and future prospects, *viz.*, the voluntary and supernatural check of religious celibacy. In this condition men approximate to the state of the angels in heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage; and thus they represent new perfections of God in humanity. By calling some to an exceptional state, God does not contradict His own general creative law; the exemption of some individuals from the command to increase and multiply is always necessary in the interest of the species. God gives only a counsel of greater perfection to a few chosen ones. When the Apostles suggested that "it is not good to marry," Jesus affirmed both the law and its exceptions. "All men receive not this word but they to whom it is given. . . . He that can take, let him take it" (Matt. xix. 11, 12). How harmonious are the ways of Divine Providence! How beautifully is natural law carried out in the spiritual sphere!

II. The state of religious Celibacy was too high for the carnal-minded Jews; it became possible only as mankind advanced, when the Son of God brought religion to the last stage of its evolution. In Himself, in His great precursor, in His Blessed Mother, and to some extent in His Apostles, He set before us examples of this higher life on earth. That life, preternatural, impossible but through Jesus Christ, has become the great glory as well as a distinctive note of His

Church. During this life the fortunate few are brought into closer relationship with God. They that are married are solicitous for the things of the world, how they may please one another, and they are divided. The unmarried think on the things of the Lord, that they may be holy both in body and spirit (1 Cor. vii. 32-34). And as to the next life, it is said of them, "These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 4). How admirable is the state which possesses such privileges!

III. The development of life is the great function of every being, from God down to the last grain of matter. The celibate and the virgins have not cut themselves off from this supreme duty. There is a double stream of human life through the ages, the natural which is from Adam through ordinary fatherhood, the supernatural from Jesus Christ through spiritual fatherhood. There is an incongruity in the combination of the double parentage in one individual; the duties of the natural father must often conflict with those of the spiritual father. The work of God in souls requires a self-devotion and attachment to the Lord such as are possible only to those detached from domestic ties. The principle of the division of labour demands the separation of the two functions. In the case of her who was the Mother of the Redeemer and the Mother of men, the renunciation of natural maternity was a necessary condition of her Divine Maternity. In like manner, under the new dispensation, the propagation of truth and morality, and the begetting of new generations to Jesus Christ has been committed to those who have refrained from begetting new descendants to Adam. Such alone have been able to do the work and reap the success of the Apostles. They have carried out on a higher plane the command to increase and multiply. "Give praise, O thou barren that bearest not, . . . for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband, saith the Lord" (Isa. liv. 1).

22.—TEMPERANCE AS TO WEALTH.

I. There is a great impulse dictated by the vital energies of man, and implanted as an irresistible instinct in certain animals that require it, *viz.*, to provide in advance materials for the support of life. The beaver and the ant lay up supplies of food for their future needs and those of their unborn progeny. Man, having to provide the necessaries of life by his own labour, and being endowed with intelligent foresight, possesses by nature the faculty of acquisitiveness and the sense of ownership. The rights of property are one of the chief bases of social organization. Progress is impossible when men live from hand to mouth, providing each day's food by each day's labour. The accumulation of wealth is necessary for the avoidance of famine, for the accomplishment of great enterprises which are not at once productive, and for the securing of leisure for mental cultivation, for exploration, for the numerous functions of government, and, unfortunately, also for war. The virtue of Economy (Οἰκονομία, management of domestic resources) regulates this impulse. It refers man to God as the remote giver of daily bread, and reminds him that man's labour is the means by which God provides for him; it helps him to maintain the golden mean between excessive accumulation and excessive profusion; it shows him, as a member of society, that the accumulation of wealth is fostered by social organization as well as by his own labour, and that the community should draw profit from it as well as the individual. Take these lessons to heart.

II. This wholesome impulse needs the modifying influence of reason and grace to keep it in due bounds. If it proceed to excess, it degenerates into one of the three concupiscences which are the curse of the world. The wealth of the earth, which divine bounty has given for the support of every man,

is diverted from its purpose, and is made to serve for the corruption of those who possess it, and the cruel oppression of those who possess it not. By inordinate pursuit after wealth, and inordinate tenacity in retaining it, the order of nature is perverted, many are deprived of that sustenance which God has provided for them and which their labours have produced, while others appropriate to themselves more than they have ever earned and more than they can ever use. Great evils necessarily result from this form of intemperance. A deep sense of injustice springs up in those so wronged, discontent with social order which supports the evil system, class-hatreds and intestine hostility within the same body, and a resolve to exact revenge. Every man becomes the enemy of every other, there is no such thing as mutual charity and good-will, but each makes the most he can out of his neighbour's distress. These evils will never cease; for the only remedy will never be universally adopted. It remains for the few who serve God to mitigate the evil as much as they can.

III. The intemperance of greed for wealth is destructive also of the spiritual life. It becomes an idolatry of mammon, which leaves no affection available for God, and no energies for aught but material things. Our Lord compares it to the thorns which choke the good seed of God's word and prevent its growth. It blinds men to ideas of morality, to their natural duties towards others, to the terrors of the divine threats, and will not allow the rays of religious truth to enlighten the intelligence. Hence the severity with which Our Lord addresses the rich, or, which is almost the same, those who trust in their riches. If attachment to wealth brings destruction on those who possess it, they at any rate have had some brief enjoyment to set against their eternal misery; but how wretched are those who ruin their souls by the greed for wealth which they can never possess, and who get neither the enjoyment of riches nor the reward of poverty!

23.—VIRTUES ALLIED TO TEMPERANCE. 1.

I. *Humility* is classed as a virtue allied to Temperance, for it is a controlling and moderating force applied to that concupiscence which is called the pride of life. From the day when our first parents entertained the foolish thought that they would be as gods, men have always endeavoured to exalt themselves beyond their due. All are inclined to hold too good an opinion of themselves, to take glory in gifts which are not of themselves but of God, to magnify themselves beyond others, their equals or betters, and to gain a position and an esteem which they do not merit. Ambition, vain-glory, self-will, independence, conceit, vanity, arrogance, insolence, are capable of going to the most extravagant excesses if not controlled by humility. Humility is a most important form of moderation. It restrains in us all those ebullitions which are most rebellious against God, most offensive to our neighbour, most discreditable to ourselves. Humility is homage to God, is real self-respect, truth and honesty; it conciliates the esteem of all, and brings peace to the soul. Its formula has been well expressed: "Despise yourself, despise the world, despise no man, despise being despised."

II. Our Blessed Lord exhorts us to imitate His *Meekness* as well as His humility of heart. Meekness is the moderation of the injurious passions of anger, violence, and revenge. It flows from humility, as its opposite vices proceed in a great measure from pride. Our esteem of ourselves leads us to resent bitterly any slight or offence offered by our neighbours, and to exhibit impatience, harshness and severity towards them. We are ready to make little of our neighbours as an indirect means of exalting ourselves. Hence we judge them harshly, and condemn

them on insufficient grounds, and without hearing their defence; we injure their character by ridicule, or misrepresentations, or innuendoes; we take severe measures against them as if we ourselves never stood in need of lenient dealings. Our Lord gives us an example of the restraint we should place on these tendencies. "The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench" (Isa. xlii. 3). Consider what a number of evils are caused, and what pains are inflicted by thoughtless failing in gentleness. Imitate your Lord. Consider how He has treated you, and how you would wish to be treated; and take care to bear yourself accordingly towards your brethren.

III. The virtue of Temperance or Moderation requires also to be exercised on the first and noblest faculty of man, the source of his activity and dignity, the intelligence. The mind craves after knowledge and truth; nothing can be more lofty; yet in this even there is danger of excess and deordination. We may be indifferent to sound knowledge, and may waste our time in trifles, allowing our powers to lie useless, producing nothing for God, for our own souls, for the benefit of the community. We may be tempted to give all our energies to acquiring knowledge which is of temporary and transient utility only, and to neglect that which concerns our eternity. There is danger also of yielding to too great curiosity, either as to things that are too high for our investigation, or things which are injurious to us to know. If we have been blessed with a knowledge of divine or natural truth, and capacity to enter deeply into it, we are liable to intellectual pride, which puffs us up, fills us with obstinacy, makes truth useless to us, and perhaps leads us to employ our intelligence against God who bestowed it on us. Do not consider yourself free from responsibility as to the use of the intelligence. See how you can employ it best for the glory of God.

24. VIRTUES ALLIED TO TEMPERANCE. 2.

I. Besides the greater virtues into which Temperance enters as a component, we may consider some smaller ones, which conduce to the perfection of a man's character, and which restrain him from irregularities which do not amount to serious sin. *Modesty* is one of these. It is a virtue which controls the external demeanour. This is a small matter in comparison with the graver precepts of the law. It is quite possible for considerable defects of this kind to co-exist with great and solid virtues. Yet the interior dispositions and the outward comportment are closely allied. As Holy Writ says: "A man is known by his look, and a wise man when thou meetest him is known by his countenance. The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of a man show what he is" (Eccli. xix. 26, 27). Modesty is not "a mystery of the body devised to conceal the defects of the character." When it is superficial and not the product of an inward principle, and when it is limited to keeping up appearances, it is not the virtue of modesty, but fraud and hypocrisy. Modesty is genuine and sincere, the product of habits of self-restraint and humility; it does not aim at effect, but yet produces it unmistakably. Do not try to cultivate the externals of modesty, but discipline your mind to humility and tranquillity, and this will correct all external traits that are offensive, ridiculous, or of bad taste.

II. The virtue of Modesty, though dealing more directly with our personal bearing, extends also to the use we make of external things. Pride, when indulged with respect to these, takes the form of ostentation, or the setting forth of our material advantages for the sake of compelling the esteem or envy of others. This peculiarly petty and vulgar vice generally fails of its purpose, it excites the pride of others to

immediate antagonism, and moves them to derision instead of veneration. In a cultivated and critical age men look below the surface of things, they are not likely to be dazzled by mere show, and they understand the difference between personal worth and the worth which is merely superadded by the possession of material advantages. Honours conferred upon those who do not merit honour win no respect for them, and still less so when those honours are grounded only on self-assertion and self-praise. Those who merit no esteem on their own account gladly content themselves with the inferior and relative honour reflected on them from their material possessions. Do nothing to be seen by men. Avoid all boasting and self-assertion. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth" (2 Cor. x. 17, 18).

III. The moderating influence of a temperate spirit should also extend to our relaxations. Change of occupation, and relaxation from constant labour is a necessity of our nature. It is the duty of the Christian to add not only to the utility of the world, but to its beauty and its joy. Two extremes are to be avoided, that which would confine all life to serious labours, and that which would spend the whole of life on amusement and frivolity. Each extreme curtails our possibilities in doing good, each is injurious to the interests of God and the advantage of souls. The great danger is lest those who have opportunities for pleasure should devote their whole energies to it; and lest others should look upon pleasure as the chief good in life, and grow restive under the law of labour. The true use of recreation is to enable us to do the work of life more efficiently. Work comes first, and no one should consider himself exempt from it. As the Apostle says, "If any man will not work neither let him eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). Neither should you seek repose unless you have earned it by labour.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE XIV.

THE STATE OF PERFECTION.

1.—THE PERFECTIBILITY OF MAN.

I. Creation is arranged on a gradually ascending scale of perfection. Each class of beings accomplishes its own purpose in its own sphere, and leads on to something higher. Man, as he is in this present life, is no exception to the rule. Compared with the lower creation, he is the last and perfected product of this earth, the final term of its physical evolution; but he has not attained his own perfection; something more is to follow. The further development of man does not consist in the accumulation of the means of existence, and the multiplication of the works of his hands on a globe that must some day perish; these are but subsidiary to something better. Nor is it the wildly fancied improvement of the species till a higher form of rational animal shall emerge and the present type disappear. Revelation shows that the course of evolution comes to an end in the actual men who have lived and who are now living; for they are immortal, and each one is called to the higher life, and supernatural perfection, and the heavenly life. In human life on earth there is an intellectual advance through the ages. But this is not all. There is a social development, *i.e.*, in organization, and in man's relations to his fellow-men. But beyond this, there is the development of the relations of the human race with the Infinite Spirit and with supreme absolute Life. This is the true line of human perfectibility. Take care that you do not come to a stand half-way, or that you do not mistake one of the means of progress for the object of all effort. Seek God alone.

II. The spiritual perfection of man in God has three stages. 1. There is the ordinary perfection which is necessary for all men alike; it consists in deliverance from sin, avoidance of it, and the possession of divine Charity and sanctifying grace, and the observance of the law. This is perfection as compared with the merely natural stage of human life. Substantially it is the same in all the just; the

baptized child, the lately converted sinner and the Apostle about to finish his course, each possesses the same God, although there be great accidental differences in the measure of their possession. This stage of perfection is still not perfect, for it is capable of being lost, and it is capable of being increased. 2. There is a second stage of perfection which is built upon the first. It is not required of all, but it is individual and of the nature of privilege, and is a matter of recommendation and not of command. It is a state of generous action towards God superadded to what is just; it offers Him in sacrifice things that man may justly retain for himself. The forms of this perfection are various; all are not called to them, nor have all the grace for them; no man can practise them all at once, for some are exclusive of others, such as the life of contemplation and the life of activity. Endeavour to render to God some such service in return for the overflowing bounty which He has manifested to you. Offer Him at least your desires if you cannot offer the actual service.

III. 3. The two forms of earthly perfection lead to the third, which alone is the final and immutable perfection of man, *viz.*, union with God by vision and love in heaven. After this nothing more remains possible in the way of advance. Human faculties will be made fit for the apprehension of the Infinite, they will be raised to the highest degree of activity, and all their possible demands will be satisfied. No further race of possible beings on earth can attain to a higher destiny than this; however further advanced they might be on earth, intellectually, socially, morally, they would still fall short of what perfected man had attained to; and so they would have a character of retrogression rather than of progress. The entrance of the human race, in the persons of the elect, into the divine life of heaven closes the cycle, and brings the whole earth back to God from whom it started. Follow after holiness, so that you too may return to God and be perfected.

2.—THE NATURE OF PERFECTION.

I. The higher state of perfection of a Christian soul does not consist in sentiments or feelings of religious satisfaction, or even in desires and good intentions. These may all exist without any virtuous action. In such cases they are evidence of sinfulness rather than of grace, for they testify not only to the existence of good impulses but to the rejection of them. There are not a few who are in this state, who never improve, and who take credit to themselves for that which will perhaps be their condemnation. Neither does an occasional good deed, or even an act of high virtue, especially if it be of the natural order, testify to a man's perfection. All men have some good points in them, every one receives continual impulsions of grace from God, and even the worst of men are able on occasion to do acts of extraordinary brilliancy that are out of harmony with the general tenor of their lives. Real perfection requires two things, that there be a permanent disposition towards good in the soul, and that this be maintained in a state of constant activity. Take care not to be misled and not to mislead others. Do not rely on a few good actions of the past, or on good intentions and desires for the future. "Desires kill the slothful; for his hands have refused to work at all" (Prov. xxi. 25). The desire to do good must be trained into a facility of doing good born of repeated acts, and this must be kept in constant exercise.

II. To be perfect is to be complete in all respects, and not merely in some or in the majority of them. A person is by no means a perfect Christian for the fact of possessing one virtue in an eminent degree. We speak ordinarily of a "redeeming virtue" among a number of faults; but this must not be understood to mean that before God it

compensates for all other deficiencies. On the contrary, it is written: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law but offend in one point is guilty of all" (Jas. ii. 10). If there be one grave drawback in a house as to the foundations, walls, roof, drainage, position, the house is worthless as a whole: so too is it with the abode of God, which is the human soul. One passion unchecked, one virtue neglected may lead to mortal sin, which destroys the supernatural character of every other virtue, and places the soul under the dominion of Satan. The pursuit after perfection is long and arduous. We require the concourse of numerous and difficult virtues, watchfulness over a thousand points of danger, the regulation of countless natural impulses. You must never consider yourself to have attained or to be secure. A sudden assault may reveal some weak spot in your armour; some dormant vice, not yet suspected because the occasion has not yet arisen, may prove to be your destruction.

III. Out of the many requirements for perfection, divine Charity is the chief constituent. The love of God is the condition of all virtuous action, it leads to all virtues, and is the summary of them all. "Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. iii. 14). Adhesion to God with all our heart and soul implies the devotion of all the faculties to Him, and alienation from all that is opposed to Him. It gives vigour in God's service, and makes all self-restraint and all sacrifices easy to our generosity. The union of spirit and heart with God makes all our actions of mind and body conformable to Him. "He who adheres to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). This being so, then if in any respect we fail, it is through error; it is involuntary and is not imputable to us for sin. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv. 8). Our love for God elicits in a still greater degree His love for us, and with it every grace and aid. Seek God first of all, directly and thoroughly, with all sincerity and generosity; all other things will follow, and you will achieve perfection.

3.—THE ATTAINMENT OF PERFECTION.

I. The first thing required for the attainment of perfection is a knowledge of its excellence and a high esteem for it. The spiritual perfection of our souls is the gate by which we enter into the possession of God in this world and in the next. It is the kingdom of God within us, the object which the external kingdom of God is intended to promote. It is the accomplishment in our souls of their resemblance to God, to His charity, purity, holiness, beauty. It is the final stage on earth of union with God. He takes the soul under the special care of His Providence, manifests Himself to it, and lavishes on it an abundance of favours such as are incomprehensible to those who have not received them. The mind is elevated by being fixed on the grandest of objects, the passions are subdued, the principal sources of disturbance are closed, and peace takes possession of the soul. Finally the work of life is crowned by a happy death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. cxv. 15). Perfection is indeed that pearl of great price which a man ought to give all his possessions to obtain. It is more than wealth, pleasure, honour, strength, genius. One of God's saints is worth more in the scales of eternal justice, and is more useful, than tens of thousands of the unholy with all the resources of this world. Esteem the state of perfection beyond everything else, and beseech God to help you in attaining it.

II. The second step is to desire perfection sincerely and ardently. The steady force of the human will is often able to accomplish the most daring purposes. In spiritual matters God never fails us, if we truly desire His grace and strive to co-operate with it. Therefore the wise man says: "I wished and understanding was given me: and I called upon God

and the spirit of wisdom came upon me" (Wisd. vii. 7). The promise of God that He will always hear our prayer refers principally to spiritual goods and to our salvation. He confirms this in the beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill" (Matt. v. 6). This desire is, as concerns us, the efficient cause of our perfection. By consideration and reflection and prayer we shall stir it up within us to great vehemence. "In my meditation shall the fire flame forth" (Ps. xxxviii. 4). Our efforts will react on our desires, and as we advance in perfection, the taste of God's sweetness will increase the soul's appetite for it. "They that eat Me shall yet hunger, and they that drink Me shall yet thirst" (Eccli. xxiv. 29). Open your heart wide to this holy desire, and God will certainly satisfy it.

III. Knowledge and desire must not remain in that stage, but must go on to express themselves in effort. Nothing comes without labour, and everything that is worth attaining has its equivalent price to be paid by the expenditure of natural or supernatural energy. The children of this world may well be taken by the children of light as models of untiring pursuit, of devotedness to one object, of self-sacrifice in seeking it. The success that crowns their efforts as a whole is an example of the spiritual success which will more certainly crown our efforts to advance in perfection. The smaller gifts of God—birth, position, talents, health—are many of them outside man's control; desire and effort will not secure them; and the widest inequalities as regards them prevail amongst men. But this is not the case with the most valuable of all God's gifts, and the one on which our happiness here and hereafter depends, *viz.*, our spiritual perfection. This is within the grasp of every man of good-will; here the most perfect equality of opportunity prevails. Devote your principal energies to the work of your sanctification and perfection.

4.—THE STATUS OF PERFECTION.

I. The possession of some degree of perfection may well be called the *State* of perfection. But this expression has a further and more technical signification. In the Christian commonwealth there are a number of persons who are aspiring to the ordinary perfection of a holy life, without being bound to any fixed rule of living. Their *State* is constituted by their inward dispositions and is known to themselves and God. But besides this there is a certain condition of life, a legally defined *Status* in the Church to which the name of *perfection* is assigned. It is constituted by certain external conditions and obligations. This *Status of Perfection* does not imply that its members actually possess the internal state of perfection, but that they ought to possess it, that they are at least bound to aspire to it, and that they have special opportunities and graces for that object. Further, it does not imply that others who are outside the *Status* of Perfection are not bound to high perfection, nor that they are necessarily on a lower grade of perfection than those who belong to the *Status*. Do not make the mistake of some who suppose that, because they do not belong to the external status of perfection, therefore they are not bound to aspire to Christian perfection. There is the perfection of the life of the precepts and the perfection of the life of the counsels; the perfection of those in the world, and the perfection of those consecrated to God. We are all without exception called to be perfect like our heavenly Father, and every one can acquire that perfection in a high degree.

II. The *Status* of Perfection is intended first for a person's own sanctification and spiritual perfection, and then for instructing and guiding others towards the same object. There are three classes of persons who have undertaken these obligations and who form the general body of the Status of perfection. These are Bishops, Priests, and those who have made the Religious Profession. Bishops are

appointed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God, and guide their flocks to salvation by word and example. They should therefore abound in grace and virtue, and should be men of high perfection, although absolute and inamissible perfection is not for them while on earth. The Priesthood is the first stage, and is a participation in that office and grace which are brought to their completeness in the Episcopal office. High perfection is demanded by its functions of celebrating the Sacred Mysteries, absolving from sin, and instructing unto justice. The Religious State is below the priesthood in its functions, and does not demand the same degree of internal perfection, although its rules are more methodical and stringent. How wonderful is the Church of God with its various states to suit the capacities and aspirations of each, with its different representations of the divine perfections, and its spiritual forces to meet every need!

III. A parable tells us of the two sons who were sent into the vineyard. One said to his father, I go, Sir, and he went not; the other said I will not go, but he went. So there are some who belong to the Status of Perfection and have not attained to perfection, who are bound to aspire to it and do not do so. On the other hand there are many who have not undertaken formally the obligations of the higher perfection, and yet carry them out. Without possessing the fullest facilities, they rise higher in grace and God's kingdom than those who do possess them. Here too it often happens that the last becomes first, and the first last. Women and children, kings and thieves, day-labourers, beggars and harlots have attained to the honours of the altars; while Apostles, Bishops, Priests, and Religious have betrayed their Master, violated their vows, started new heresies and schisms, led their charge astray, and lost their own souls. Official holiness is not the same as personal holiness. Perfection does not depend on the external status. But you must strive to be perfect in accordance with your calling.

5.—THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

I. "Religion," in a special sense, or the "Religious Life" means the condition of those who live in community, and dedicate themselves to God by the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. The organized effort after perfection by such superhuman virtues, carried on by so many hundreds of thousands in every age is one of the greatest glories of the Catholic Church, it is a most complete reproduction of the life of Christ in actual practice, and manifests the wonderful operations of God upon human nature. Millions have renounced the world with its pomps, pleasures, and sins, on the faith of a future life, and out of pure love for God. They have resigned all material things by the vow of Poverty, the external exercise of their will by Obedience, and have dedicated their bodies to God's service by Chastity. Thus they are enabled to carry out every possible kind of work that the needs of religion and their brethren demand, and to render to God the untrammelled service of mind and heart. By combination and organization they multiply their individual efficiency; by their prayers they call down the blessings of God on mankind. Rejoice in this wonderful work of God in His Church; and in the existence of all this heroism of virtue, which outweighs the outrages of men against their Maker, the self-indulgence, greed, and revolt against law which are filling the world with misery.

II. The Religious Life offers inestimable advantages in exchange for the sacrifice of certain worldly privileges. The dispositions of mankind are very various. Some desire to give themselves up to a life of wide beneficence instead of the narrow duties of domestic life; others find in a large community a scope for gifts which require a broader field than ordinary life affords; others seek retirement from

the turmoil and miseries of life; many who would be condemned to a life of inactivity or solitude in the world are able to find in the cloister escape from the world, and yet a larger companionship, tranquillity of life joined with abundant work and utility. They resign home and family, and find a new home that is not liable to be broken up, and more numerous spiritual parents and brethren. They are freed from the heaviest cares of life, they have subdued the ebullience of their own passions, and their rivalry is of good example and mutual charity instead of those rivalries of jealousy, hatred, and dishonesty, which prevail in the outer world. They have leisure for close intercourse with God, and they serve Him day and night in His tabernacle. Admire the goodness of God and the wisdom of the Church which have provided so abundantly for the needs and the higher aspirations of so many souls, and which offer a secure haven of refuge from the tempests and perils of life.

III. The Religious Life, with all its advantages, is still not a life of acquired perfection or of perfect happiness; it is not exempt from those trials which are necessary for the gaining of the crown. It is an approach to Paradise, but it is not yet Paradise. There still remains the conflict with self, the need of constant labour and self-abnegation, the cross to be carried behind Our Lord. Scripture itself warns us of this: "When thou comest to the service of God stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccli. ii. 1). These burdens, however, are much lighter than the sacrifices imposed by the world and fashion, much lighter still than the calamities which are so frequent in the course of ordinary life. Further still, they have great alleviations and compensations, both in this life and in the next. The mind is well disciplined, it is resigned to God's will, and it finds its comfort in Him. Pray God to multiply His servants for their own advantage and for the profit of the world, and for His glory.

6.—THE VOWS OF RELIGION.

I. Voluntary Poverty. The first evangelical counsel of perfection is the renunciation of earthly possessions, and this is the first vow of religion, opposed to the concupiscence of the eyes. Our Lord gave the example of this virtue; He was born, He lived, He died in the extremest poverty, though He was the Lord of all things, and had all the treasures of the earth at His disposal. Those who wished to become His disciples were required to renounce all that they possessed, or to sell their property and give it to the poor. The Apostles and the early Christian communities observed all this literally. The counsel is not indeed necessary for all; but it is still required by God to be observed by some for the completer reproduction of the image of Jesus in His members, and for an example to the world of perfect living. Some need that lesson to teach them to be disinterested, and to check the inordinate greed of gain; others need it so that they may learn the dignity of poverty, and be helped to bear their hard lot. Poverty is a great aid towards holiness of life, for riches bring cares, and create new wants, and incite to self-indulgence, and enervate the spirit, and distract the mind from God. Learn to regard wealth and poverty according to the light shed on them by the example of Christ and His faithful followers.

II. Perpetual Chastity. The second evangelical counsel and vow of religion is opposed to the concupiscence of the flesh. It is virginity or celibacy. Consider the brilliant examples of Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, the great precursor, the beloved disciple, St. Paul, and perhaps others of the Apostles. The New Testament in several places declares this to be a higher and better state, but one beyond the reach of the majority of mankind. St. Paul shows how great an aid this virtue is to the practice of a

higher life, saying that those who are unmarried are able to devote themselves more exclusively to the service of God, as they are freed from the solicitude of pleasing their partner in life. They are delivered also from many others of the cares and duties of life, and are enabled to give themselves continuously and in combination to other more engrossing and necessary spiritual labours. It is necessary that this aspect of Christ's life should be abundantly set forth, for the example of a sensual world which is disposed to deny the possibility of ordinary virtue. Rejoice at the glory God receives from so large an army clothed in white garments who follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. These indeed "were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 4).

III. Entire Obedience, or the renunciation of one's own will and the exercise of independence is the third counsel of perfection and the third vow of religion. Here again Our Lord leads the way, for He came into this world, not to do His own will, most perfect though it must be, but the will of His Heavenly Father; and it is written of Him that He was made obedient even unto death. The unbridled indulgence of man's fickle will is the ruin of all order, all authority, all efficiency. Every one needs to restrain it, even in the interest of his own worldly success, and for the regulation of his natural character. The spontaneous human impulse always runs counter to the impulses of grace, the human will always tends to oppose the divine will. The example given by Our Lord in this respect is one that needs to be imitated by all men; and it is fitting that there should be some who carry their imitation of Him to an heroic degree of self-abnegation. "An obedient man shall speak of victory" (Prov. xxi. 28). Especially in the spiritual sphere and in the work of God is obedience necessary for safe guidance, for the union which is strength, for the efficiency of our labours, for the victory of good over evil.

7.—THE VARIETY OF VOCATIONS.

I. The vitality of the earth is shown by the universality and abundance of the vegetation that adorns its surface, and by the rapidity with which, after any great cataclysm, it covers the ruins with new verdure. The spiritual life of the Church of Christ appears in the immense multitude of its religious orders. The Christian body teems with vocations of every kind. Millions in every generation feel an irresistible impulse to strive for the highest perfection, and they exhibit that impulse under the most varied forms corresponding to the varied needs of humanity. This phenomenon persists through all changes of time, and place, and fashion. Persecution has often made a clean sweep of the religious orders in a country; they yield uncomplainingly, and disappear before the storm; but as soon as its fury relaxes, they begin to spring forth silently here and there till again they cover the face of the land. All the efforts of Satan and his agents, violence, irreligion, corruption of manners, have never been able to destroy the roots of the life of perfection which Jesus Christ planted in the Christian society. So the cities of men have encroached upon nature and at times have been abandoned; and within a few years they have been obliterated by a spontaneous growth of grasses, thickets and forest trees. So a prairie fire leaves behind it a desert of ashes, but the first shower of rain produces a young and more beautiful verdure than before. What a wonderful spiritual vitality is thus manifested! Truly the finger of God is here.

II. Every age of history has its own characteristics, its own crop of evils, its own peculiar needs and peculiar aspirations, its maladies and its remedies. Human inventiveness accommodates itself to every change of the environment; and this is the case in the spiritual as in the material sphere. At first, devout persons aided the Apostles by relieving them of the drudgery of "serving tables". A little later, enormous numbers fled from the abominations of decaying paganism to serve God by contemplation in the

deserts. Later still the regular religious orders reclaimed the forests and morasses of Europe and formed their wild inhabitants into agricultural and urban communities. The monasteries saved learning, science and art from the irruption of outer barbarism, and gradually diffused them through the world. Military orders undertook to defend Christian civilization against the devastating torrent of Mahommedan cruelty; others redeemed the captives enslaved by the Mediterranean pirates; others founded hospitals, schools, asylums for the unfortunate, or as missionaries they inaugurated the work of exploration, and opened the way for civilized men to the remotest parts of the earth. What a wonderful instrument of progress the spiritual life has proved to be! How different would be the present state of the world were it not for the religious orders!

III. An institution so universal, so spontaneous in its life, so plastic in its forms, so indefatigable in its labours, is proved thereby to have an intimate and necessary connection with the spiritual life, and with the secular life of modern civilization. Spiritually it is necessary, in order to represent the infinite aspects of the divine perfections in the higher life of men. Here we see what St. Paul speaks of: Diversities of graces, ministries and operations, which are all manifestations of God unto profit. To each is given a special gift; but in all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one as He will (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 11). Materially the monastic system is required for its economical advantages; it enriches a country in so far as its productiveness exceeds its consumption; it is an example of the dignity of labour and is a teacher of industry; the organization and devotedness of its members enable it to carry on great works that are usually impossible without enormous capital. Interference by States with the monastic system has generally produced financial catastrophes. Pray God to bless and prosper this invaluable system.

8.—THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERFECT.

I. Consider the actions which are characteristic of those who, whether in the world or in the cloister, have cultivated the higher perfection, and have advanced some way in its attainment. They begin by taking true views of themselves, not distorted by the blindness of conceit, and these views are lowly ones. They take a true view of life, remembering that this world passes away, that the next one is eternal, and that man's great duty here is to glorify God and save his own soul. They have a horror of sin above all other evils, they avoid every occasion that may lead them into it; and if unfortunately they fall at times through surprise or human weakness, they hasten to do penance and reconcile themselves to God. They shun the world and the spirit of worldliness, they despise its highest interests, disregard its opinions, and will not conform to its ways of laxity and vice. In all things they trace the hand of God's Providence and adore His wonderful ways, they conform themselves to His disposal of things, and trust themselves with confidence to His guidance. They esteem and love God, and delight in Him beyond all else; they taste His sweetness and repose in Him. They listen to God's inspirations, they endeavour to advance His glory, promote the knowledge and service of God by others, and work always with Him and for Him. They have a personal love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, they live in constant union with Him, and they love and serve all mankind as His brethren and as the purchase of His blood. Consider each point separately and endeavour to regulate your actions accordingly.

II. Action is by no means all. Suffering is a second characteristic of those who would be perfect. Those whom God loves He chastens; and the cross necessarily precedes the crown. No one can have part with Christ without drinking deeply of His chalice. It is a mistake to suppose that fidelity to God will exempt any one from the ordinary

lot of humanity. The holiest of all was required to become the Mother of Sorrows. Even in her case Paradise did not begin on earth. The just have to endure the ordinary calamities of life. They have to suffer at the hands of those who hate God and His justice; and at the hands even of other just men, who are allowed to misunderstand them, or who retain some natural imperfections for their own exercise and the trial of others. The just suffer from the sight of the revolt of men against God and the frightful harvest of miseries which result therefrom: they suffer from themselves, from self-reproach, from uncertainty as to their future, from the consciousness of their own potential sinfulness. They suffer, too, at the hands of God who punishes their infidelities, or withdraws His consolations for their trial, or leaves them a prey, while still guarding them, to doubts and temptations. Accept your lot with patience; it will keep you from presumption, make you reliant on God, and prepare you for the reward.

III. These troubles, however, are counterbalanced by God's mercies. And this is the third characteristic of the perfect. God will not allow His servants to be tempted beyond their strength, and He remains with them even when He seems to have abandoned them. The afflictions of the just have a special character: they are signs of love and not of wrath; they are for sanctification and not for punishment. God's own have comfort and peace even in the midst of the extremest tribulations, and they never feel that bitterness, loneliness and hopelessness which affect those who have not placed their confidence in the Lord. God sustains them and manifests His presence to them, and gives them a firm assurance of eternal happiness, which will compensate for all their tribulations. The just who suffer have also the satisfaction on earth of finding themselves made centres of good work and of holy influences, and of strength and light to many other souls. Thus does God make with temptation issue that His just ones may be able to bear it (1 Cor. x. 13).

9.—THE RELATIONS OF THE PERFECT.

I. Consider the conduct of the perfect in their different relations towards God, their neighbours and themselves. As regards God, He should fill the whole field of their vision; He should be remembered as always present, as the source of all life and goodness, as the goal to be striven for, as the object of all their veneration and love. The next thing is to keep His commandments, whether given in the Old Testament or the New, through the voice of nature, or conscience, or His authorized Church. These should be observed fully and cheerfully, not as disagreeable restraints from which dispensation is to be sought on the smallest show of reason, but as the rule of our life and development, and as the condition of our progress and happiness. The merit of obedience should not be destroyed by an unwilling or sluggish observance or by the admission of any inferior motives. Those aspiring to perfection are not contented with obedience to the strict law of God, they do not limit themselves to the minimum required for salvation, as if they were driving a bargain and feared to give too much; but they desire to be generous with God as far as possible, and they know that the most they can do is infinitely small as compared with what God bestows on them, and with what He deserves in return. Such persons value the Holy Sacraments as the great treasures of God, they make frequent use of them, especially of Holy Communion and the Sacrafice of the Mass.

II. Consider the relations of the perfect towards their neighbours. They regard all mankind with reverence, as being the highest creatures of God, His living images, and the object of His eternal interest; they regard men with love as bound to them by the ties of brotherhood and common descent,

and as secondary objects of the same love that has to be shown towards God. They do not consider their fellow-men as their natural enemies or their natural prey, created to be the servants of their ambition and avarice, or the victims of tyranny and lust. Nor do they look upon other men with indifference and carelessness, asking with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. iv. 9). But the perfect regard their fellow-man as a living soul, equal with themselves in the sight of God, destined to an equal throne in the kingdom of heaven. The rules of conduct are first to love one's neighbour as oneself, then to love him as Christ loved us, and to treat him as we would wish to treat Our Lord, and as Our Lord has treated us. The perfect therefore sacrifice themselves for their neighbours, and consider that they are doing to Our Lord what they do for them. In all your dealings with your neighbour remember these truths; ask yourself what is the best mode of action and strive to carry it out.

III. Men have obligations of action towards themselves, duties towards their natural and supernatural life. We cannot say that we can do as we like with our own, for we do not belong to ourselves but to God. We must respect ourselves and love ourselves accordingly, and seek to promote our truest welfare, which is our eternal happiness in God. The perfect remember, however, that the animal life is very often in opposition to the interests of the soul, and that its sensual impulses must be watched and controlled like dangerous enemies. In this respect therefore it is necessary that we should despise ourselves, and hate our own lives, in order that we may preserve them eternally. One great duty of aspirants to perfection is to cultivate the interior life according to Jesus Christ, thinking of Him, seeking Him, and modelling their ideas, aspirations, likes and dislikes, and all their soul's activity according to the interior dispositions of the Heart of Jesus.

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE XV.

THE SACRAMENTS.

1.—THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

I. "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isa. xii. 3). We require grace and energy of various kinds from God; first the grace of knowledge and faith through revelation, then force in action. After the intellect has been illumined, the executive powers must be regulated and sustained. The supernatural life must be inspired into us, developed, and, if lost, again restored to us. All this ought to have been conveyed to us by generation and heredity from Adam. He chose deliberately to convey to us only the fallen natural life; it was for the second Adam to become the source of the supernatural life. The communication of the supernatural life has been dissociated from natural agencies; it has now to be imparted to us through supernatural institutions. Adam gave us the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of evil and of death: Our Lord gives us the fruit of the tree of life which had been forfeited. Through the fall, human nature tends towards excess and deterioration in all its faculties and appetites; its dangers and its needs are many; it requires aid in different conjunctures, or as we say, different kinds of grace. The Sacraments meet all these needs: they bestow on us that which Christ merited for us, forgiveness of sins, incorporation with Him, admission to eternal glory. Consider the great dignity of the Sacraments, their importance, and the value you should set on such a treasure.

II. In harmony with the corporeal element of human nature, many of God's graces are conveyed under sensible forms. As men are, they need outward signs, ceremonies, words; for the phrase "out of sight out of mind" applies even more to spiritual than to material things. For the maintenance of civil order, of nationality and patriotism, of energy and enthusiasm, it is necessary that not only the

intelligence, but the imagination and even the senses of men should be impressed. Very few minds can entertain strictly abstract considerations, they need that ideas should be vested in concrete forms. Further, we find that even for our intellectual operations we require supplies of dead matter as food; also that incorporeal ideas are conveyed by means of material signs and sounds, or that they are carried into effect by mechanical contrivances, the pencil, the lever, the chisel. It is harmonious with our present condition that God should use material forms for operations of grace which otherwise would be imperceptible to us; so that the signs may explain the effects of the graces to us, and give us a moral certainty as to the reception of them, and excite our devotion, and move us to make due preparation for these graces. How beautifully are the ways of God accommodated to the requirements of men!

III. These signs and ceremonies are immediately productive of grace. They are not like the signs and ceremonies appointed by men or even by the Church, for the purpose of conveying instruction or moving to sentiments of devotion. Such signs have no intrinsic efficacy; the good which follows them is not caused by them, but by the human dispositions of which they have been the occasion. As compared with the Sacraments, all other ceremonies are mere "weak and needy elements" (Gal. iv. 9), like the ordinances of the Jewish law. They do not convey grace or forgive sin; they have only a natural power of suggesting thoughts to our minds. The Sacraments are directly instituted by Our Lord Himself. The Author of grace alone can appoint the conditions on which grace shall be given; He alone can give a supernatural efficiency to material instruments. He acts in the Sacraments; the ministry of men, the substances used, the words pronounced, are the conditions under which He acts. Thank Our Lord for the divine efficacy He has implanted in material things. By them He does the same for you, and transforms you from a mass of sin into a child of God.

2.—THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENTS.

I. The Seven Sacraments are the great sources of energy and the regulating principles in the Christian system. They are the machinery of the supernatural order, by which God imparts His graces to us, rectifies the irregularities of our nature, preserves us from decadence and corruption, makes us capable of the loftiest duties, strengthens us against weakness, discouragement, and temptation, and gives us the power of understanding Him and entering into His life. The Sacraments have also their effect as to the organization and external administration of the Christian community. They are a visible token of unity, the signs and the proofs of our incorporation into the society founded by Our Lord; they are a profession of our faith, and an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ before men; they are a bond of brotherhood and love between the faithful. The Sacraments form a classification of mankind; a separation of the faithful from the unbelieving, of the beginners from proficients, of the rulers and teachers from the ruled, and of the natural parents from the spiritual ones. Pray God that these great mysteries may produce their full effect upon you and upon all mankind, sanctifying their lives, and building up the visible kingdom of Christ.

II. In their action on the soul, the Sacraments have a direct and proper efficiency of their own, as being used by Jesus Christ to convey His graces. In this respect they differ from the ordinances of the Old Law, and from various rites and ceremonies and observances in the Christian Church. The efficiency of these latter consists in exciting sentiments of faith and devotion which obtain graces from God in return. In the Sacraments it is Our Lord who baptizes, forgives sin, and bestows Himself on us through the instrumentality of His delegates. The efficacy of the Sacraments does not proceed from the dispositions or virtues of their human minister. Though he be in the state of sin or even devoid of faith, yet if he accomplish duly the forms

prescribed, the grace of Christ is conveyed in its fulness. Neither are the dispositions of the recipient the efficient cause of the grace derived from the Sacraments. The Sacraments operate in him, provided that he have that amount of disposition for them which consists in the non-existence of obstacles. Hence Baptism and Confirmation work their effects on infants; and the man who has desired the last Sacraments profits by them though he be unconscious while receiving them. Our better dispositions, however, will increase our worthiness and our capacity for grace, and the measure in which we receive it.

III. The Sacraments have different effects according to their different purposes. All are alike in conferring sanctifying grace; but two of them, Baptism and Penance, confer it in its first stage by raising us from sin to life; the others by increasing the grace and perfecting our life. Each Sacrament has further its own Sacramental grace, which confers actual graces according to the purpose of the Sacrament. Baptism is the new birth. Confirmation gives the Holy Ghost, and brings us to spiritual maturity. The Holy Eucharist is our daily food. Penance is a remedy provided for spiritual disease, both curative and preventive. Extreme Unction is a provision for the last and most critical moment of life. Holy Orders provides for the government of the Church and the continuance of supernatural life. Matrimony sanctifies the continuity of material life, and keeps men from being degraded to the level of the lower creatures. Three of the Sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, have a further peculiarity: they constitute men into classes with permanent characteristics which are never lost, with privileges, duties and powers which remain for ever. These cannot be given more than once. What abundant provision God has made for all human needs! Be sure that you require that which God has thus bestowed on you, and that you cannot neglect the Sacraments without most serious injury.

3.—THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

I. Signs of grace constitute the chief part of the symbolism of religion under the Old and New Testaments. Religion has never been presented to men in an abstract form as if they were simple intelligences. The incorporeal God has often made His presence known to human senses, in the burning bush, the pillar of fire, the thunders and voices of Sinai, the cloud that filled the temple. The ancient system was full of signs of some further reality. Such was the tree of life in Paradise, the sacrifice of Abraham, the covenant of circumcision, the Red Sea, the tabernacle containing the word of God and the bread from heaven, the continual sacrifice of the lamb at the rising and the setting of the sun. Actual persons were types of others yet to come—Adam, Eve, Moses, David, Solomon, Esther, Judith. Symbolism is the mould in which God cast religious ideas so as to make them concrete to average men. The same principle prevails in the New Testament. It is not given to us as yet to see face to face with the spiritual eye; when invisible realities are presented to us, it is under the cover of some external sign or action, which at the same time manifests divine mysteries and veils them from us. The symbols of the present religion are much nobler than those of the former one. Study to discover all that underlies them. Cultivate the spiritual senses by which you may see God, and hear His voice, and be raised to a higher level of life and action.

II. The various signs given to the Jews and observed by them were divine in their origin; but yet St. Paul calls them "weak and needy elements" (Gal. iv. 9). The sacrifices and consecrations were mere empty resemblances prophetic of some future reality; they had no efficacy as applying the merits of Christ to the soul or as cleansing it from sin. They wrought only an external cleanliness from legal defilements, they enrolled men externally in the race from which the Messias was to spring, and entitled them to participate

at some future time in His merits. The Jewish ordinances kept up the memory of the promises, and expectation of their fulfilment, but they conveyed no grace to men's souls, except so far as by moving them to faith, and sorrow for sin, and sentiments of devotion. As soon as these dispositions failed, God declared the festivals which He had appointed, to be an abomination in His sight, and rejected as worthless the blood of goats and oxen. Hence the saints of the old time did not enter heaven at once. Heaven is the sight of God grounded on aptitude for the sight of God. Disembodied spirits in the supernatural state are fully adapted for the sight of God. The souls of the ancient just, therefore, were not fully raised to the supernatural state, or were still in some degree bound by the consequences of sin, and only possessed a title to the future promises before the actual death of Jesus Christ put them into full possession. How imperfect and unhappy was that earlier dispensation as compared with the present!

III. Consider the superiority of the Christian Sacraments. They do not promise us forgiveness and grace but actually bestow them; they do not simply remind us of God, they bring us into positive union with Him; they are not mere promises of salvation, they really accomplish it in us; they are no empty figures, but they do what they promise and convey what they signify. The Sacraments actually strengthen us, console us, help us to bear the troubles of life, enable us to practise the highest virtues, restore us after sin to the state of grace, and make us fit to enter the presence of God. What a great treasure do we possess in the Sacraments! What a glory they are to the Church! What privileges we receive by our membership in it! How vastly superior is the Christian Church to that of the Jews: how unfortunate are those sectarians who have been deceived by false prophets, who have been put off with a stone instead of bread, who have been deprived not only of the reality, but even of the symbols of the Christian's heritage!

4.—BAPTISM.

I. Baptism is the first and most important in that series of mysterious operations of grace with which Our Lord endowed His Church. Baptism is the Sacrament of Regeneration, or the New Birth, by which we are "born again of water and the Holy Ghost" (John iii. 5). It brings us forth into a new world, that of the divine supernatural life, it gives us new faculties, higher obligations, and special aid to enable us to live up to our vocation. Baptism does for us individually what our first father, Adam, resigned the power of doing for the race; it restores to each, on his separate application, the second and more important part of our inheritance, which ought to have come to us by birth as an appanage of human nature. On the second birth the true nobility of man depends. He attains thereby to the great dignity of a Christian, a child of the Eternal Father, a brother of the Incarnate God. Baptism also enrols us in the society of the faithful on earth, and gives us a title to membership in the kingdom of heaven; it communicates to us all the faculties which are necessary for that higher society, the power of receiving all the other Sacraments, the light of faith by which we are able to apprehend God supernaturally, the habits of virtue which enable us to accomplish all justice. Thank God for the great grace of Baptism. Consider it as your highest privilege. Account its anniversary as your true birthday, the birthday of your spiritual life.

II. The Old Testament prefigures Baptism by the waters which issued from the right side of the Temple and healed every living creature to whom they came (Ez. xlvii.). Our Lord shows its greatness and its necessity: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5); and He commanded the Apostles to pour those life-giving waters on every crea-

ture (Matt. xxviii. 19). St. Paul shows us the importance of Baptism in its connection with the death and resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour. "All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death. We are buried together with Him by baptism unto death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 3, 4). These passages show us the character of Baptism; it is a refreshing, a cleansing, a healing, a life-giving ordinance; it is the new birth according to the Spirit, it brings us into union with the death of Jesus which was for our sins, and with His resurrection which was for our justification (Rom. iv. 25). All this has been really accomplished in you. It becomes your duty now to maintain your soul on the heights where God has placed it, and to make your whole life correspond to its spiritual commencement.

III. There are many figures of Baptism in both Testaments. The Deluge represents it, for it was a purgation of the world from the sins which overwhelmed it, and it introduced a new order of life. The passage of the Israelites over the Red Sea denotes our passing through the waters of Baptism, our deliverance from oppression into liberty, and our formation into a chosen nation ruled by God, and endowed by Him with religious laws and worship. The Baptism of St. John was a preliminary to the institution of the perfect Baptism by Our Lord. It was a Baptism of penance, not remitting sin by its own efficacy, but leading men to contrition and change of life. Jesus consecrated that ceremony by submitting to it Himself, and by the revelation of the Father and the Holy Ghost as presiding over it. The opening of the heavens, and the words of the Father, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, denote that Baptism opens heaven to us, that we become beloved sons of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit descends also on us. Be careful that you do not relapse after these favours into the common sinful life of the world.

5.—THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM.

I. Consider the different effects produced in the soul by the Sacrament of Baptism. There is an infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul; this is a conveyance of the perfect life in God, which involves the destruction of all the obstacles to that life. The first effect, therefore, is the remission of Original Sin, then the remission of all actual sins, mortal and venial, that may have been committed, and the destruction of all the remnants of sin, such as abide in the soul after forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, and have to be obliterated by sufferings in this world or in purgatory. Another effect of the infusion of sanctifying grace in Baptism is the purifying and beautifying of the soul; and in this are included the habits or facilities for exercising Faith, Hope, Charity, the Cardinal Virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. There are also special sacramental graces, which are the equipment of the soul for its new condition and for the new obligations that are imposed on it. A further effect is the permanent character or seal impressed on the soul, marking it as having become a child of God, and as having dedicated itself to His service; this quality is never lost, and abides eternally for the glorification or the greater disgrace of the soul. Baptism is also the admission to the full privileges of membership in Christ's kingdom on earth, and to participation in all the good works and merits of the whole Church. Be grateful to God for every one of these favours; take care that you do not forfeit them by being unfaithful to the obligations that accompany the privileges.

II. The dignity of Baptism and its effects are signified by the solemnities of its administration. The exorcisms denote the deliverance of the soul from the tyranny of the sensitive nature, and its detachment from those allurements

of the passions through which the spirit of evil misleads and ensnares us. Salt is given as an emblem of that spiritual wisdom which enables us to enjoy the savour of supernatural things. We are anointed on the heart, the shoulders and the head, so that we may be likened to Christ the Anointed One, who is King, Priest and Prophet. We are made to renounce the devil, the world and the flesh, and to confess Our Lord, His Church, and all His doctrines. Other ceremonies recall the actions of Our Lord in curing the sick or conveying spiritual blessings, such as the imposition of hands, breathing on the face, anointing the ears and nostrils with spittle. At last the water is poured, cleansing the soul from sin in the Precious Blood shed on Calvary. The white robe of innocence is then conferred, and the burning light which we have to exhibit to the world by the holiness of our lives. The sponsors witness this, and undertake our spiritual guardianship. Excite in yourself the sentiments which correspond to each of these ceremonies.

III. On account of the great necessity of Baptism, it is made the most easily accessible of all the Sacraments. The administration is not limited to bishop or priest, or even to believers; but every human being has the power to confer it, and thereby to forgive sins, and confer grace, and open the gates of heaven. Further still, in the impossibility of receiving the actual sacrament, the mere desire of it, with contrition, has the effect of a real Baptism in remitting sin, and is classed as one form of the Sacrament. And not only this, but the readiness to receive Baptism, or the implicit desire on the part of those who do not know of it, is also sufficient; they too may be reckoned among the baptized and regenerated. Those who come to Christ in any way whatever, provided it be to the best of their knowledge and abilities, He will in no wise cast out. Give God thanks for the breadth of His mercy, and for the bounty with which He has placed salvation within the grasp of every human being.

6.—CONFIRMATION.

I. Carrying out the comparison with our physical life, another Sacrament represents the second stage of our progress. The prince or the citizen receives his status, his rights and his dignities, on entering at his birth into the community; but he cannot at once undertake all his functions; he must first come to maturity, he must be formed, educated, nourished, before he can take his place as an active member of society. In Baptism we become children of God; in Confirmation we arrive at spiritual maturity and become soldiers of Christ. We then appear before a higher officer of the Church. He invokes the Holy Ghost, and prays that we may receive each of His gifts; he imposes his hands upon us after the manner of Our Lord and His Apostles; he signs us again with the Cross upon our foreheads, so that we may be able to profess Christ and not be ashamed of His ignominies; he anoints us for the conflict, with chrism, in the name of the Holy Trinity; and he strikes us on the face to remind us of that which awaits all who are faithful to God in this world; and at the same time he assures us of that peace which man is not able to give. Thus do you attain "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). Thus are you assured that "He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). Rely upon the grace that has thus been conveyed to you; it has made you capable of fulfilling every duty and overcoming every foe.

II. Consider your need of this Sacrament. It is exhibited in the case of the Apostles. Before the Ascension they had already been fully educated by their Divine Master; they knew Him and believed in Him, they had ministered to Him, had instructed others, had wrought miracles in His name, had been encouraged by His Resurrection. Yet they

were incapable of doing their work as Apostles until the Holy Ghost descended upon them. They remained in retirement, till a mighty wind shook the house they were in, and the parted tongues, as it were of fire, rested upon them, and they felt the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 1-4). At once they were changed into different men, they went forth and commenced their preaching, and the force of their words converted thousands. They received the power of recalling all that Jesus had taught them, the gift of preservation from all error, wisdom and strength for founding the Church, and fearless constancy against persecution and torments and death. What are you without the Holy Ghost! Knowledge, cultivation, talent, opportunities are nothing without Him; you cannot profit by them; and with all your efforts you cannot command success. But with the Spirit of God you can do all things.

III. Consider the effects of Confirmation. The first is the general effect of increasing sanctifying grace in the soul. It further confers a permanent character or a special status in the spiritual universe, and, thirdly, the peculiar sacramental graces which are required for the new condition to which the soul has been raised and the new duties incumbent upon it. There are three special characteristics of the Holy Ghost which correspond to three human needs. He is the Spirit of truth, of strength, of love. Truth is difficult to discover and more difficult still to maintain, against our own propension to error and the hostility which fills the intellectual atmosphere, and the insidious attacks directed against divine truth. We need great strength if we are to persevere in the numerous duties of a Christian life, in the unceasing conflict against the evil in ourselves and in the world, and in suffering for the sake of principle. We need help to love God and our neighbour in an age of selfishness and uncharitableness. You have those graces: it is only necessary to "stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands" (2 Tim. i. 6).

7.—THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN SCRIPTURE.

I. The heavenly banquet and sacrifice under the forms of bread and wine appears prophetically in the Old Testament like a thread of gold running through its texture. The emblem of supernatural life in the garden of Eden was a certain food. At the fountain-head of the Old Dispensation there is a sacrifice of bread and wine; and the Jewish sacrifices are shown to be inferior to it, by the homage which Abraham paid to Melchisedec (Gen. xiv., Heb. vii.). In the temple a particle of the bread from heaven was reserved in the Holy of Holies; the show-bread stood as a constant memorial on a golden table in the tabernacle; a portion of unleavened bread was offered morning and night by the priests for a perpetual sacrifice; every victim that was sacrificed was sprinkled with the symbolical flour; and in most cases the act of worship was completed by priest and people eating of the victim. In Malachias we read of a clean oblation (of flour) yet to come, which was to be offered for ever throughout the world. Thus did the glimmer of our sanctuary lamp shine dimly through the thick mists of earlier ages, inspiring veneration for the unrevealed mystery. What solemnity surrounded the figure! We have the reality unveiled to our eyes; it should move us to more solemn worship, to a deeper sense of gratitude, to more vivid faith, to a much fuller surrender of ourselves, body, mind and soul, to God.

II. The great mystery was disclosed, but yet only in a partial degree, when Jesus fed the five thousand in the desert (John vi.). He gave them food miraculously multiplied, which recalled the manna of the exodus. Then Our Lord declared that He was the bread, the living bread from heaven. The bread that He gives is not merely a symbol

that is to recall His memory, it is His own body. His flesh is really meat, His blood is really drink. We must truly eat His flesh and drink His blood, or we shall not have life in us. This bread was to be something more than the bread of angels which Moses gave to the Israelites in the desert of Sinai; but ordinary bread recalling the Last Supper would be less than the manna, it would be no more than the show-bread of the Jewish temple. Figures now were to give way to a most startling reality, that was to try the faith of men, and separate the staunch believer in Christ's word from those who will not trust Him farther than they themselves can see. Thank God for the revelation of the mystery made to you, even though it be still in part obscure; thank God for that infused facility of belief which enables you to hold so difficult a doctrine with the most absolute security. This is one of the greatest privileges granted to those who are faithful, humble, and self-sacrificing.

III. The final revelation of the nature of the Holy Eucharist was made by Christ at the Last Supper. Yet even this was not complete. He defined the fact but did not explain its method, the matter but not the manner of it. His Body and Blood together with His Soul and Divinity are really present in the Holy Sacrament; in other words Christ is really present. Then for the first time the Divinity was united to humanity in this new method; then Our Lord entered into a new union, not merely with the human race in general by His participation in a common nature with them, but with each individual personally. So was the long course of prophecy and figure at last accomplished humbly in the upper room. So did Our Lord give us His last testament, the great bequest that remains to us from His life and death, the memorial of all the wonderful works of God, the summary of all that His love and wisdom had done for mankind under both the Ancient and the New Dispensation. Esteem this great mystery highly, and try to fathom by meditation and prayer all that it contains.

8.—THE NATURE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. The Holy Eucharist is a Sacrament of the New Law instituted by Jesus Christ Our Lord at the most solemn epoch of His life. He gave it just before His Passion as the last Testament of His love, His legacy to mankind, an enduring memorial of Himself. No other sacrament was so abundantly prophesied in figure under the Old Testament, or so repeatedly and clearly described in the New. This holy sacrament is superior to all the others, inasmuch as they are signs and channels of grace, while in this is contained the great reality which is at the centre of the Christian system, the Author of all grace Himself. All the other sacraments look to the Holy Eucharist, and are in some way subsidiary to it, as preparations or qualifications for it, as securing its continuance, as perfecting its effects. In its outward sign the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is a Banquet. Its matter, wheaten bread and the wine of the grape, typifies its spiritual functions as the daily food and drink which strengthen our souls and maintain their spiritual life. The words which raise the earthly materials to the sacramental dignity are those of the last supper: "This is My Body. This is My Blood." Admire the wonders of divine wisdom, the intensity of divine love, the boundless generosity which has bestowed such a treasure on mankind. Let it be always your most valued treasure, the object of your deepest faith and love and gratitude.

II. Consider the marvels of divine power involved in this Mystery of mysteries. 1. The Real Presence. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Living God is actually and most really present in this Sacrament. He is there as truly as in heaven, or in the stable, or on the cross, with all the completeness of His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. 2. Transubstantiation. At the sacramental words the substance of the bread and wine ceases to be, and is replaced

by the substance of Christ's Body and Blood. 3. By a further miracle, the species or appearances of bread and wine remain after their substance has disappeared; and Our Lord abides there not under His proper form, but under the guise of inferior substances. 4. The ordinary laws of matter and space are so far superseded, that Our Lord is entirely present under each element, and under each particle, and on every altar throughout the world from the rising to the setting of the sun. Thus, in His glorified Humanity He participates in some measure, in the divine attribute of ubiquity. Bow down in humble faith before these surpassing mysteries. If the voice of sensual nature says: "This is a hard saying"; confess in the sublime confidence of the Apostles, "Lord, . . . Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John vi. 61, 69, 70).

III. The Holy Eucharist is the summary and completion of God's wonderful works. It completes the work of Creation by elevating man to his highest possibility on earth. Already, "we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). The work of the Incarnation is completed by bringing the Son of God into union with humanity in its individual members. Not only is man elevated, but inanimate matter also is sanctified by the selection of some of its particles to be the material from which this Sacrament is confected, and by the use of its sensible appearances as a veil for Our Lord's glory. So "the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21). So does all creation rise towards Christ and return upon the source from which it originally proceeded, completing the chain of God's wonderful works. Holy Communion is the great means by which you are to complete your being, and attain the object of existence, and become absorbed into union with God.

9.—THE MOTIVES OF THE REAL PRESENCE.

I. The first divine purpose that is accomplished by the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, is the glory of God. In this mystery as elsewhere "the Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4); for an infinite object is the only adequate motive of divine action. 1. God's glory is promoted by the exercise and manifestation of His attributes. His power is shown by the many great miracles of the Blessed Sacrament, and His goodness in that He does so much and submits to so much, in pursuance of His desire to dwell among the sons of men. There are marvels of wisdom too in the beautiful adaptation of the remedy to the disease. The fall of man was associated with a symbolical food, his restitution with another mystic food. We inherit sin and death through our corporal descent from Adam, we receive eternal life through our bodily union with Christ in Holy Communion. 2. The Divinity is glorified by the homage and humiliations rendered by the Son of God in every church, by the unceasing sacrifice of the Mass for ever in progress from East to West, and by the fact that every one of mankind is able to assist at that sacrifice and offer adoration in actual union with Jesus Christ. In assisting at Mass and in visiting churches, let your first thought be to worship the Eternal Father. Know that you can fill a very high position in the universe of creatures who are constantly glorifying His name.

II. A second purpose in the Blessed Sacrament is the exaltation of the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Lord. Although His sacramental existence is a state of humiliation and exposure to neglect and profanation, it is nevertheless a state of honour. 1. Our Lord's material body is spiritualized by being raised to that higher state of matter to which the rest of mankind will only attain after the general

resurrection, and it is raised above the ordinary laws which now rule bodies. 2. The Sacred Humanity is endowed with some participation in the divine attribute of immensity, by being present in so many places throughout the earth. 3. From the day of the Ascension to the last day of the world, the Sacred Humanity is the central object of the attention of mankind. It receives the perpetual adoration of millions of the chosen ones of the human race, those who stand highest in spiritual culture, in moral excellence, in supernatural gifts. Religion in its highest expression in the Catholic Church, with all its apparatus of noble buildings, and festivals, and consecrated lives, and activity of every kind, is all devoted to the supreme worship of Jesus Christ. Rejoice that He receives such glory in His state of lowliness. Honour Him, especially in Communion, so that you may say, "Now also shall Christ be magnified in my body" (Phil. i. 20).

III. A third purpose is the utility of man. We are brought into immediate intercourse with Our Lord. We kneel in His presence, we speak to Him face to face, we receive Him corporally in Holy Communion. The tabernacle where Jesus dwells is the refuge of all devout souls; there is their delight; there they find comfort, and support, and guidance, and peace, strength, sanctity, happiness. Let those who have tasted of the sweetness of the Lord try to realize what our churches would be without the Real Presence, and what our lives would be. If it were to cease from among us, it would be as if the sun were extinguished in the heavens. Religion would become cheerless and gloomy; the daily Mass with its crowds of worshippers would be at an end; the empty abandoned churches would be locked up from week to week, monuments of inutility, simple meeting-houses for uninterested men; and no longer the House of God. Consider what the Real Presence means to you; value this great gift, and thank Our Lord for His great bounty whenever you come before Him.

10.—THE ACTION OF JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST.

I. Consider the self-sacrificing benevolence of Our Divine Lord in uniting Himself with the species of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist. On account of the lowliness of these forms there is involved, in a sense, a greater self-abnegation than even in the mystery of the Incarnation. The nature of man is infinitely inferior to the divine nature, but still it bears a considerable resemblance to it; human nature is at least living and intelligent. In the Holy Sacrament the Divinity is concealed under the appearance of dead substance of insignificant value. From His throne in heaven Our Lord descends to the lowest grade of created objects. He lays aside even the dignity of man, such as it is, and becomes in appearance inanimate, helpless, absolutely at the disposal of man; He leaves Himself exposed to neglect, contempt and outrage, and He actually endures the most terrible profanations during century after century. Truly there is no depth to which Our Lord is not ready to descend for love of us; there is no sacrifice too great for His devotedness. Consider this, and thank Him for it. Consider how grudging has been your service of Him; how unwilling you are to surrender anything of your possessions, your dignity, your comfort for Him. Make Him such a return as you can; prepare to make sacrifices if He demands them; abase yourself before Him, and say, "I will make myself meaner than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes" (2 Kings vi. 22).

II. Consider the desire of Jesus for our company, and His eagerness to unite Himself with us, as manifested in the Blessed Sacrament. Truly His delight is to be with the children of men (Prov. viii. 31). He courts us, and invites us, and accommodates Himself to us, and waits for us, and submits to all our humours, and petulance, and

treacheries, if only at last we consent to His desires and admit Him to our hearts. It would seem almost as if He had all to gain by our friendship, and we had everything to give. Our Lord veils His splendour lest it should deter us from His presence, as the glories that shone from Mount Sinai terrified the Israelites. He does not dwell in one temple only, as at Jerusalem, but within reach of every man's home. He does not conceal Himself, as formerly, from all eyes, in the innermost court where none but the High Priest once in the year might approach Him; he does not demand, as then, imposing architecture for His house, and precious woods covered with gold, and rich hangings, and solemn ceremonies, and tithes of all our possessions. But He dwells in poverty, and is worshipped in simplicity, and may be visited by all, and gives Himself to the vilest sinners at once upon their repentance. Let it be your delight to be with Him. Use your privilege of visiting Him and receiving Him frequently. Remove every obstacle on your part which interferes with your union with Him.

III. Consider the prodigality of Our Lord's love in allowing Himself to be received and consumed by us. This is a further descent and annihilation of Himself, out of individual love for each one of us. He unites Himself with our tepid, worldly, sin-stained souls, and subjects Himself frequently to the sacrilege of unworthy communions. He lavishes an infinite love on us, and receives in return only a little love from a small number. How much He must value us! What an intensity of good-will He bears towards us! Human imagination and ambition could not have conceived the thought of such an excess of love. Then Our Lord departs from us so that our weakness may not be overburdened by His continued presence, and that we may not be compelled to recollection and prayer for a longer time than we can endure. Give yourself up entirely to Our Lord, and try to respond to His love. Endeavour to be absorbed in Him as He is in you.

11.—THE EFFECTS OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. The efficiency of a thing is in direct proportion to its nature. Every cause produces its full effect, as water rises to its proper level. A great design must have a great purpose to accomplish. In our solar system the sun is the greatest body and the greatest force; and it becomes the source of all the energies of its attendant planets. The Holy Eucharist is the greatest and most powerful of institutions on this earth. It is not a mere creature, it is the Son of God Himself. It is not an instrument or channel of divine operations, it is the original source of all grace and spiritual life. Jesus Christ is there, not in mere figure, not as dead and passive, but in His living body actuated by His soul and Divinity; He is there with all His divine power and infinite love; He is there to act upon us and upon the whole world. The Blessed Sacrament is the sun of the spiritual world, the source of all light, heat, motion, energy, life. It works steadily, silently, imperceptibly, but universally and irresistibly. Consider the activity of the great powers of nature; consider the activity of the combined intelligence of humanity; consider the power and the work of Our Lord during His earthly course. Much greater than all this is the efficiency of Our Lord continuing the greatest of the divine works from His retreat in the tabernacles of our churches. The Blessed Sacrament is like the Ark in the house of Obededom, a centre of all blessings. The Victim raised up from the earth daily in the Mass is doing all that is consistent with human liberty to draw all souls unto Himself. Look to the Blessed Sacrament as the source of all your strength and life; have recourse to it in all your needs.

II. As the effects of original sin extend to every department of our being, so do the effects of that Sacrament which perfects our being. On the spiritual life of the soul Holy Communion acts like food; it sustains life and strength by

repeated influxes of grace, it causes growth and advance in virtue, it repairs the continual waste, or the loss of spirituality which results from the wearing influence of a worldly atmosphere, and it communicates a savour of sweetness to the palate of him who eats of this food. What more than this can you require? In the sphere of the sensible emotions the passions are controlled, concupiscence allayed, blind impulses held in check, the dominion of reason and the will confirmed; courage and endurance are increased, the weight of anxieties becomes less, the evils of life cease to be oppressive. The body is sanctified and made worthy of respect as being really the temple of God; it receives by Communion the title to a glorious resurrection; its material condition is in certain indefinite ways benefited. The Blessed Sacrament suffices for all your needs. How great, how irreparable is the loss of those who neglect this heavenly food or receive it carelessly!

III. The Real Presence of Jesus Christ radiates its influence throughout the world, and attracts souls in each one of its three forms. 1. As a Sacrifice, in the form of the Mass, it is unceasingly rendering worship to God, making atonement for sins, and purchasing blessings for the whole body of mankind. 2. As a Sacrament, when it is received by the faithful in Holy Communion, it sanctifies individual souls, gives energy and success to their spiritual labours, and makes their prayers more efficacious. 3. As reserved in the tabernacle Our Lord fulfils that which was promised of old. "I will set My tabernacle in the midst of you and My soul shall not cast you off. I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be My people" (Lev. xxvi. 11, 12). There Our Lord is visited daily by tens of thousands, and thence He pours forth His bounty upon them. See that you profit by the treasures that are thus set forth for your advantage. "Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let no particle of the good gift escape thee" (Eccli. xiv. 14).

12.—DISPOSITIONS FOR COMMUNION.

I. "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man who tempteth God" (Eccli. xviii. 23). It is unlawful at any time to rush inconsiderately into the presence of God; and more especially are reflection and preparation required before entering into the intimate intercourse of Holy Communion. St. Paul enforces this duty: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor. xi. 28). This is an exceedingly important duty if we would exhibit proper respect to Our Lord and profit by our Communions. The return from the seed which is sown in our souls will depend on the amount of culture which the soil has previously received. And yet all our preparation is quite inadequate. Our best is exceedingly little; but it is worth much in the sight of God provided it is our best. No one is really worthy ever to receive Our Lord; nor would the combined fervour of all angels and saints make us worthy. Yet Jesus requires us to contribute what we can of good dispositions; He accepts them as if they were sufficient, and supplies our deficiencies from the infinite treasure of His own merits. "Who then can be able to build Him a worthy house? If heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, who am I that I should be able to build Him a house: but to this end only that incense may be burned before Him" (2 Par. ii. 6). Do not be disturbed on account of your unfitness, but be all the more grateful to Our Lord, and make more fervent efforts to prepare your self worthily for Him.

II. The chief, and in fact the only essential condition for Holy Communion is that one should be free from mortal sin. Mortal sin is the antithesis, and, in a manner, the destruction of God; it expels Him instantaneously from the soul; He cannot exist in the same place with it. As mortal sin is that which constitutes hell, any one who compels the

material presence of Our Lord in a dwelling possessed by sin, equivalently attempts to cast Him into hell. An unworthy Communion is a treason and an outrage that exceeds all conception ; it is a greater indignity to Our Blessed Lord than all that was inflicted on Him in His Passion by Judas, Caiphas, Pilate, Herod and the executioners. The soul exempt from mortal sin is in the state of grace and supernatural life ; God is with it, and it may lawfully receive the Body of Christ. Shortcomings of various kinds, indevotion, negligence, haste, venial sins even, do not make a Communion to be unworthy ; they are only an obstacle to the fulness of its effects. Still less is our Communion made unworthy by involuntary deficiencies, wanderings of the mind, temptations, absence of sensible devotion, the necessary curtailment of preparation or thanksgiving, or the fact that we have only lately risen from the state of sin. See how little God requires of you. Do not refuse Him that little. He might have demanded years of preparation and heroic sanctity for one Communion in a life-time. Thank Him for His generosity.

III. It would be unfitting if we were to limit ourselves to the minimum of good dispositions required for Communion. We should strive rather to do the most we possibly can, out of regard for the greatness of the gift, and for the profit that we shall receive from it. Imperfection in the holocaust, *i.e.*, in our dispositions for Communion, is disrespect towards God, although it be not mortal. God will be to us as we are to Him. Coldness and neglect check the abundance of His graces ; generosity and fervour cause His heart to open towards us and overwhelm us with His bounty. Consider the sentiments of virtue suitable for Communion—Faith, Contrition, Humility, Love, Generosity, Recollection, Desire of Christ, Abandonment of self to Him. Cultivate these habitually, so as to keep yourself always in readiness ; practise them particularly when you are about to receive your Lord.

13.—THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION.

I. As in nature action and reaction are equal, so beneficence should produce an adequate return of gratitude. Even brute beasts can recognize kindness when shown to them, remember it, and show affection in return. Especially does every generous heart magnify favours received and endeavour to make recompense. In Holy Scripture gratitude to God for His benefits is a predominant note. Between man and man ingratitude is regarded as a vice, peculiarly vile, the index to a depraved character. One of the greatest trials of Our Lord's human heart was the sight of men's indifference to His love and unnatural ingratitude for all He had done for them. How pathetic is His word, "Were not ten made clean and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger" (Luke xvii. 17, 18). For the great gift of God to the world and to each of us individually we should entertain a proportionate gratitude; and the most fitting time for its expression is when we have just been placed in possession of that gift. When you receive Holy Communion, your faith in the Real Presence of Jesus and your knowledge of His infinite bounty ought to inflame your heart with supernatural fire, and make you desirous of rendering to the Lord for all that He has done to you. Remember what Our Lord expects of you, and be careful to make always a fervent thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

II. The Thanksgiving after Communion is one of our most important spiritual exercises. It is the occupation assigned to us for the most valuable moment of our lives, when Jesus is really present with us and when we can say with literal truth, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). When Jesus is our guest we should do our utmost to entertain Him worthily; we should devote

all our thoughts to Him, and shut out everything else from our minds. Our own profit and spiritual advancement depend in a very great degree on the use we make of our opportunities in the moments that follow Communion. Our Lord comes, saying, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke xix. 9). He is longing to communicate with us heart to heart; He is rich in graces, and eager to pour them forth upon us. But if we are cold, distracted with mundane thoughts, weary of His divine presence, having nothing to say and nothing to ask for, then we are offering Him offence instead of entertainment, and preparing punishment for ourselves instead of merit. Take care that it be not with you as with the Jews in the desert: "As yet their meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them" (Ps. lxxvii. 30, 31). Be wise enough to know the time of your visitation, and value the moments after Communion beyond all others.

III.—The custom of the Church has consecrated a certain form of exercise as best expressing our gratitude for the heavenly gift. The first sentiments that naturally rise in a soul illuminated by faith are Admiration and Wonder at the great work that God has wrought in it. Next follows profound Adoration of the Divine Guest, with praise for His perfections; and then Thanksgiving. Then we may ask Him to speak to our souls, while we listen silently to His voice, to the interior suggestions which He makes to us. We should place ourselves at His disposal with all that we have, in acts of oblation. Then comes the prayer of Petition. Our Lord has much to bestow and is anxious to give it to us. We must lay before Him our needs, and our desires on behalf of others and ourselves, trusting to His unbounded generosity. Then we beg for His blessing and ask Him to remain spiritually with us after His corporal presence has ceased. Be not like Judas who rose at once and left the table after Communion, but remain with your Lord as long as you are able.

14.—THE FRUITS OF COMMUNION.

I. Holy Scripture says of the manna that was sent from heaven to the Israelites, that it was "The food of the angels . . . bread from heaven . . . having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste . . . and serving every man's will, it was turned to what every man liked" (Wisd. xvi. 20, 21). The manna was a figure of the Blessed Eucharist. The fruits of Communion are most rich and varied; they are accommodated to the tastes and necessities of each person; they meet all the wants of life; they vary according to the constitution and capacity of each, as the effects of natural food depend on the age, health, appetite, and occupation of different men. Food supplies the constituents of the blood, muscles, nerves, bone, and brain; it sustains us in every kind of labour, bodily and mental; it keeps off disease or helps to cure it. So too the spiritual food of souls is necessary for all men, and adapted to all conditions, to priest and layman, recluse and man of business, to the strong and the weak, the young and the old, the passionate and the mortified, the stumbling sinner and the aged saint. Never think that you do not need this food, or that it will not meet your wants, or that your state makes you unsuited for it, or that you cannot properly prepare for it. Be assured that it is the prime necessity of your life, the one panacea for every disease and weakness, the delight of every palate.

II. In order that we may derive the fulness of benefit from the food of our souls, it is necessary that we should take it with due frequency. It is our *daily* bread, and is intended for our daily needs. The spiritual life corresponds to bodily life in its tendency to gradual relaxation, weakness, and ultimate exhaustion. Every moment there is a strain

upon the energies and consumption of tissue. One of the offices of life consists in constant renewal to counterbalance constant decay. The yoke which is sweet and the burden which is light grow monotonous and irksome; constant duty and constant restraint chafe the spirit and provoke it to rebellion. There are moments of danger which we cannot foresee; we find suddenly that the Philistines are upon us, and we need to be ever watching and prepared for vigorous resistance. We must therefore have a constant supply of daily strength; and not only this, but we must lay up beforehand a reserve of strength. An occasional Communion at long intervals will not suffice. If such be our custom, our life will be a history of falls alternating with partial recoveries; it will not be a steady progress. Communion must be frequent. Its frequency will be both a cause and an effect of fervour. Those who are duly disposed will feel an attraction towards it; those who are not well disposed will become so by communicating often.

III. Psalm xxii. shows us some of the fruits of frequent and fervent Communion. 1. The Lord will rule us and mould us according to His will. 2. Nothing will be wanting to us of grace, knowledge and security. 3. God will feed our souls with holy thoughts, with the waters of refreshment and with more than earthly sweetness. 4. He will make us walk in the paths of justice and every virtue. 5. In the midst of the shadows of death we shall be saved from dangers, and we shall fear them not, resting on God for our staff. 6. We shall enjoy continually the divine banquet which strengthens us, the oil which anoints our heads with peace and gladness, the chalice of inebriation which makes us forget all else in the delights of divine love. 7. God's mercy will follow us and never fail us. 8. We shall dwell in the house of the Lord, now where He abides sacramentally, later in the abode of His glory. Receive your Lord with increasing frequency, and at the same time with increasing devotion.

15.—THE SACRIFICE OF THE EUCHARIST.

I. The Holy Eucharist, besides being the abiding presence of Jesus Christ in His Church, and a Sacrament as communicated to us, is also a mysterious Sacrifice. In this respect it accomplishes the great requirement of objective religion, and the demand of the religious sense in man. Sacrifice is an offering, a supreme offering, that testifies to the supreme excellence and absolute dominion of God. Ordinary gifts or tributes may be presented to human superiors; the oblation of life, by means of its destruction, has always been recognized as due to God alone; and the universal sense of mankind has generally led them to worship God with that ceremony. As a natural sign the victim, 1. stands as a substitute for man, and suggests that he offers himself unreservedly to his Creator and Master; 2. it is the appropriate offering from a rebel and criminal, in token that his life is due as an expiation to the Majesty offended. According to divine law "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Under the Old Testament this great truth was conveyed in figure by the Jewish sacrifices; the Christian system gives us the reality in the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. As a Christian you are the heir of all the ages. The universal aspiration of mankind is expressed and is satisfied in the sacrifice of the Christian Church. Supernatural revelation explains the natural impulse in man, and has developed his crude forms of worship into one which is most solemn and beautiful, rational and spiritual.

II. The Mass is the perpetuation of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. It is not a different sacrifice, for all others are now abolished; it is not a repetition of the same, for Christ died but once (Heb. ix. 25-28). But the sacrifice of Calvary did not cease when Our Lord was removed from the Cross. He is an eternal Victim, continuing now within the veil His first and only oblation; and He is for ever

"in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb standing as it were slain" (Apoc. v. 6). He appears daily on our altars in the same character of Priest and Victim, and continues His sacrifice there as before the throne. The ceremonies that accompany His presence are themselves of a sacrificial character; they have the form of death, of the shedding of blood, of the destruction of the Victim, and they would be sufficient for that purpose if Our Lord were not immortal. He is there under the form of matter, dead as far as our senses apprehend Him; the separate consecration of the two elements is, to our senses, a separation of the sacred Body and Blood; finally Our Lord loses His sacramental existence when the species are consumed in Holy Communion. How admirable is this sacrifice of Jesus, which is over and yet continues, which is one and yet is in a manner multiplied, which is offered in every part of the world, and at which we can be really present.

III. Consider how exactly this mystery is indicated in the Old Testament. "In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a *clean* oblation (*i.e.*, of flour). . . . From the rising of the sun even to the going down My name is great among the Gentiles" (Mal. i. 11). The Paschal lamb was a vivid image of the Crucifixion: and the "continual sacrifice" of the lamb morning and night in the temple, prefigured the constant renewal of the same sacrifice. The great annual sacrifice, when the High Priest carried the blood of the lamb upon his hands from the altar in the outer court into the divine presence within the Holy of Holies, is an exact figure of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offers for ever the same sacrifice in two places; He began it on earth, and He offers it still, both on earth, and within the veil on the altar before the throne. The privilege of the Jews was great beyond those of all other nations in possessing their divine emblems; how great is your privilege, above that of the Jews, in knowing the reality, and being able to assist personally at the eternal sacrifice of Christ.

16.—THE SACRIFICE OF CALVARY COMPLETED IN THE MASS.

I. In the economy of redemption there are two stages, the action of Jesus Christ, and a human one which applies His action to our souls. Our Lord prayed, taught, suffered, died; but that which He thereby merited for us is conveyed to us through our own prayers, the teaching of His ministers, and the Sacraments. So it is with the Sacrifice of Calvary. There is a means appointed whereby we may be present at it and make it our own; and that means is the Holy Eucharist in the form of the Mass. It is an outward sign by which we "show the death of Christ until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). It was ordained by Him when He placed Himself under the appearance of bread and wine, and said, "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). It makes us communicate in Our Lord's death considered as an act of worship to God. The Mass completes the external forms of religion in the Christian system; it gives us a solemn ceremony as an external bond of union; and that ceremony is no mere shadow of a past event, but is really the great act of worship and expiation wrought by Christ, and brought by Him from heaven, and placed before us. What a wonderful form of worship is that which you have inherited or gained for yourself! "Neither is there any nation that hath gods so nigh to them as our God is present to all our petitions" (Deut. iv. 7).

II. The Mass, by its connection with Calvary, enables us to express all the emotions of the religious sense with an efficacy that belongs to Christ Himself. 1. The Crucifixion was the supreme act of worship, which rendered to God His full due. But this was to be the action, not of one alone, and without the co-operation of the rest of mankind, and only in their name. It was to be, as far as possible, a sacrifice offered by every man. Those who assist at Mass make the sacrifice actually their own offering, by the fact of

being present and uniting their intention with that of the Chief Priest, and by eating of the Victim as the offerers did of old among the Jews. 2. The Crucifixion was a sacrifice of thanksgiving, which renders to the Almighty in proportion to His bounties. The Mass enables us to do the same, according to the words of David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv. 12, 13). In the Mass we have that chalice, filled with the blood of Jesus. We give back to God as much as He has bestowed on us. He has given us the Son of God; we give Him the Son of Man, who is identical in value because the same in person. See then what a service you render to God every time you assist at Mass. Avail yourself of all such opportunities.

III. The Crucifixion had as its second object, man. 3. It was a sacrifice of expiation for sin. The daily pouring out of the blood of Jesus is a torrent that overpasses the daily torrent of horrible iniquity that deluges the world. This is why the wrath of God does not exact vengeance for our sins as it did in the ancient world by the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, and the extermination of the Canaanites. 4. The Crucifixion was also a sacrifice of impetration, a prayer which moved the Almighty effectually to grant mankind the numerous blessings temporal and spiritual which they need. Our prayers are of no account whatever; and even if they were, there remain many who take no thought of their salvation, who never pray, who do nothing that may merit for them even a death-bed repentance. In the Mass we can pray effectually, for we pray with the great Sacrifice. We can say: "Behold, O God, our protector and look on the face of Thy Christ. . . . Look from heaven and see, and visit this vineyard, and perfect the same which Thy right hand hath planted; and upon the Son of Man whom Thou hast confirmed to Thyself" (Ps. lxxxiii. 10; lxxix. 15, 16).

17.—DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

I. In the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant was the central object of the temple, the temple was the centre of Jerusalem, Jerusalem of the Holy Land, and the Holy Land was the historic and religious centre of the world. The Holy Eucharist now is the ultimate central object to which all things in the Church and the world, in the Old and the New Dispensation, converge. Religion gradually condenses from its vague natural forms into Judaism and Christianity; and its operation is completed by union at last with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Calvary is the place where Jesus was lifted up, and where He draws all devout hearts unto Himself; it is the mountain of the house of the Lord to which all nations were to flow (Isa. ii. 2). Calvary is in the Holy Eucharist, and is in every land and every village where the red light glimmers before the tabernacle. There is the centre to which all the devotion of the Church is drawn, there is the centre of all doctrine, of all moral life, of charitable works, of progressive ideas, and, above all, of spiritual life. The church-building may be a triumph of architecture, made more splendid by painting and music and ceremony, or it may be almost a hovel; yet in each alike the devout soul finds strength, peace, safety and delight. Let the tabernacle be the centre of your life. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . For better is one day in Thy courts above thousands" (Ps. lxxxiii. 2, 11).

II. A deep emotion is stirred in almost every heart by the sight of a Catholic church with its altar, its tabernacle, and its ceremonial. All are moved by either strong attraction or strong repulsion; none are indifferent; some feel awe and devotion, others an impious irritation. What is the secret of this? It does not depend on appeals

to the bodily senses, or to the imagination or the æsthetic sense; it is not a question of taste or even of judgment. It is that Jesus Christ is there really present. He acts variously on souls according to their predispositions, as when He walked on earth: and they recognize Him instinctively as the sign set either for their fall or for their resurrection. To the faithful, Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is the source of every spiritual influence. He dwells there in the form that is most useful to them. He casts in His lot with them, He welds them, as far as human perversity will allow, into unity, He brings them into union with Himself and His Father. Beseech Our Lord to act thus upon you. Look to Him for principles to guide you, for inspirations to move you, for grace to help you. Then you can say: "In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, hast singularly established me in hope" (Ps. iv. 9, 10).

III. Your religious life proceeds from the Blessed Sacrament; it should also return thither. Jesus on the altar is the central object in the Church, to which all else is subsidiary—liturgy, devotions, ceremonies, confessionals, font, side altars, adornments. So Jesus holds the first place in your life; and all doctrines, laws, and forms of worship are intended to lead you to Him. Your mundane life also, intelligence, imagination, science, business, should help you towards Him. You should devote yourself to the service of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Endeavour to make Him known to others, and increase His glory by bringing new adorers to His Church. Be zealous also for the service of the material temple of Jesus Christ, and its adornment and even its splendour. The Church is really "the house of God and the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17). All who are spiritually minded must say: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps. xxv. 8). This will be a material test of your spiritual devotion.

18.—THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE.

I. Penance is that moral virtue by which we turn our minds from sin to God, regretting the evil we have done, endeavouring to make reparation, and purposing to sin no more. The aim of this virtue is nothing less than to reverse that law of the universe, the law of cause and effect, which makes suffering follow on transgression: speaking anthropomorphically, its aim is to appease the anger of God. Penance faces the further difficulty of retracing one's steps on the downward path, and changing formed habits and acquired appetites. It is just and reasonable that, when we know who God is and what He has done for us, we should feel shame and regret for having offended Him, whether we have done this by deliberate ingratitude or by weakness. The same habit of mind will make us sensitive to the wrongs done to God by those who belong to us as members of the same family, or nationality, or religion, or race; and it will cause us to make reparation in our own persons for their misdeeds. Hence Jesus Christ, as being of one blood with mankind, suffered shame for what His brethren had done, and was impelled even by His human sentiments to offer an atonement that was not due from Him personally. You owe satisfaction for your individual wrong-doings, and for those of the race with which you form a corporate personality. It is your duty to make atonement out of the spirit of penance as did Jesus Christ.

II. Consider the excellence of this virtue. One of the preliminaries of justification and sanctification is that we should alienate ourselves from sin and from all affection to it. This was one of the first recommendations of Christ: "Unless you shall do penance you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 3). Nature itself dictates this sentiment to upright and generous minds when conscious of offences

against parents, rulers, benefactors, and God most of all. We have examples of penance in Adam, Noah, David, the Israelites, the Ninevites. Penance was the burden of the prophet's continual exhortations; it was the cry of Our Lord's precursor, "Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2). St. Augustine says that no one, however blameless, should dare to appear before God without having done penance. The virtue of penance is an essential condition of validity for the Sacrament of Penance; without it the Sacrament is an empty form and a mockery of God. The virtue alone is of so great efficacy that it supplies for the absence of the Sacrament when there are obstacles to its reception. Cultivate the habit of Penance as a disposition of mind and heart, and as a practice that shall be one of the characteristics of your life.

III. The virtue of Penance manifests itself in several operations of the intellect and will. The interior acts are hatred of sin, regret and shame for having offended, readiness to suffer what is due as a compensation to justice, a resolve to sin no more, a desire to render glory to God in reparation, and also joy in our sense of sorrow. Its exterior manifestations are the open confession of sin, a more fervent observance of the law, the avoidance of occasions of sin, withdrawal from the allurements of the world, the infliction of austerities, as a penalty for sin and as a means of acquiring self-restraint for the future. You are not endued with a true spirit of penance according to Christ, unless it express itself in these ways. The Apostle's example shows us the necessity of penance as a safeguard for God's servants. "I chastise my body and bring it under subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27). Accept the unavoidable evils of life in the spirit of this same virtue; it will sanctify them and make them of immense benefit to you. Be glad if in this way you are made sorrowful according to God unto penance (2 Cor. vii. 9).

19.—THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

I. Penance has a further signification. It is a Sacrament in which God gives efficacy to our sentiments of Penance, and gives us assurance of pardon. One of our greatest requirements is repeated forgiveness for our daily sins, and the assurance of it. In accordance with other cases, these graces are given to us by God through certain outward observances, which remind us of our needs, indicate the nature of the grace accorded, compel us to make a definite effort, suggest the habits of mind that are required, impress our memory, and give us a certain moral assurance that the divine action and our action have been duly exercised. The Sacrament of Penance, like the other sacraments, has this further advantage, that it acts not merely in proportion to our dispositions, but with an additional efficacy implanted in it by the goodness of God. It gives us more definite and more efficacious graces of forgiveness than could be gained by the Jews of old in virtue of their repentance, or by those outside the Church, who do not know of the divine ordinance that supplements our imperfect dispositions, and gives a new value to our inadequate sorrow for sin. Admire the wise dispositions of Providence in giving us a sacrament, that is so harmonious with the rest of the divine system of religion, that conveys such important graces, and comforts us with full assurance that we enjoy the divine favour. Thank God for this gift.

II. The form assigned by Our Lord to the Sacrament of forgiveness is that of a judicial process. The criminal takes his place in an attitude of conscious guilt before the tribunal; the judge is another subject of the supreme King, appointed to administer the law in His name; the

prosecutor is the criminal himself putting forth a plea of guilty. The indictment is exposed in full, deliberation takes place, a penalty is assigned, and sentence pronounced. The sentence, however, is not one of condemnation; it is a remission of sin, a restoration to spiritual freedom, an acquittal; for it is pronounced in the name and by the power of Him who said, "Neither will I condemn thee; go; and now sin no more" (John viii. 11). This is a most suitable form for the sacrament; for it makes the sinner appear as an offender against the law; it inflicts the shame of avowal in atonement for the shamefulness of sin; it humbles the head that has raised itself in rebellion against God; it is the substitution of a merciful trial and sentence, instead of the terrible accusation and judgment which should be the lot of all sinners on the last day. Praise God for the wonderful combination of justice and mercy in this sacrament. In receiving it you may find satisfaction in the thought that, while you are receiving a free pardon, you are still making some amends to divine justice.

III. Consider the elements of the Sacrament of Penance. They consist in actions which have the form of a trial and sentence, and the purging of the offence. 1. On the part of the penitent, they are sincere sorrow and detestation of his sin with a purpose of amendment, the avowal of guilt, and the satisfaction or penance (in a third sense of the word) which calls into effect the atoning sufferings of Christ and makes them ours. 2. On the part of the priest, there is the sentence of absolution, which completes the outward series of actions, and communicates the inward grace of the sacrament, or the immediate forgiveness of sin and restitution to the supernatural sphere. Such is the Sacrament of reconciliation, of peace, of comfort to troubled souls. Few words are of more happy augury than those of Jesus to His Church: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven" (John xx. 23).

20.—THE EFFACEMENT OF SIN.

I. The first effect of the Sacrament of Penance is the complete obliteration of mortal sin. This idea, so familiar, is exceptional in the economy of the universe, and is a reversal of the dominant law of cause and effect. In virtue of the law of the transformation of energy, every cause has its adequate effect. Some actions are fatal and final, and can never be reversed. Man can destroy life, and all the immense forces of the universe cannot restore it. God alone can recreate as He alone can create. Mortal sin is one of those fatally destructive forces; and its effect is irrevocable, except by a direct intervention of Omnipotence, to which there is no parallel in the simply natural order. Mortal sin sets up a permanent change in the soul, destroying the last germs of spiritual energy and life, as though a living tree were suddenly converted into charcoal. Without the God-Man, Jesus Christ, there could be no rehabilitation after original sin, or after one single act of mortal sin. Through Him, God has implanted a new source of energy and life in the human race; a new and dominant law comes into effect, which overrides the ordinary law of the universe for the sake of our happiness, which recalls the past, and undoes the fatal action of evil. Praise God for the mercy which surpasseth judgment and all His works (Ps. cxliv. 9).

II. Consider the completeness of the obliteration of sin in the Sacrament of Penance. 1. It is without exception. There is no partial remission. The restitution to grace involves the forgiveness of every single mortal sin; the infusion of life amounts necessarily to the healing of every mortal wound, and not of two or three only. "There is

therefore no condemnation (*damnatio*) to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). The atrocity of our sins makes no difference. "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as wool" (Isa. i. 18). The unpardonable sin is no other than the refusal of forgiveness. 2. Without delay. Certain minor consequences of sin remain indeed for a while, like a scar on a wound; but the actual guilt and liability to the extreme penalty pass away like tow that is consumed in the flames, at the presence of inward repentance (*i.e.*, perfect contrition) and (at least in desire) of sacramental absolution. No long probation is required; in the twinkling of an eye the work of restoration is thoroughly accomplished. Let your repentance for sin be equally without exception or delay.

III. 3. Without limit. Though we sin ten thousand times, God is never weary, but forgives ten thousand times, with only renewed compassion for our inconstancy. 4. Without condition. The forgiveness is not made dependent on our future fidelity, but only on our sincerity at the moment. There is no such thing as coming up again for judgment on past sins in case of a relapse. God takes no account of our future infidelities or even of our final reprobation. 5. Without the revival of our past sins in case of our relapse. Whatever we may come to hereafter, remitted sins are absolutely annihilated; for "the gifts . . . of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). How wonderful and how undeserved is all this goodness of God! Think of David, St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalene. Their sins, enormous as they were, could not prevent them from attaining to the sublimest heights of love and glory, but were even stepping-stones thereto. Never despair of forgiveness. Never think that your sins are capable of surpassing the infinite mercy of God and the infinite atonement of your Redeemer. Let your trust be likewise boundless. "Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 16).

21.—THE REVIVAL OF MERIT.

I. To understand the second effect of Penance, we must first consider one of the effects of sin. The loss caused by sin is not only that of present supernatural life and the possibility of meriting while in the state of sin, but also the loss of all the treasure of merits accumulated by past good works. All that is supernatural in the soul is ruined and lost, including all supernatural reward that had been earned. Sanctifying grace has gone, the possession of the Holy Ghost, the infused habits of Faith, Hope and Charity, the Cardinal Virtues. Sin, which is destructive of God in our souls, is destructive of all that is God-like in us of the supernatural order, and of all the consequences of our good deeds, except so far as the acquired facility of virtuous actions may aid us in turning to God by repentance. How terribly destructive is sin! What complete ruin it causes! What a squandering of precious treasures! How great will be the remorse of the soul in hell which realizes that it had done quite enough for heaven, and has neutralized it all, and sacrificed the beatitude already earned, for the sake of a few long-past moments of sinful enjoyment! "If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity, shall he live? All his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered . . . in the injustice that he hath wrought he shall die" (Ez. xviii. 24, 26). Let this increase your dread of sin.

II. The second effect of Penance is the revival of all past graces and merits, and the rewards contingent thereon, which had been destroyed by sin. Here we have an example of the greater intrinsic efficiency of good over evil. Sin lays waste all supernatural growths in the soul: but these revive again in the new spring-time of penance: the dry bones of previous good works will come together, and the sinews,

and flesh, and skin will cover them, and the Spirit will breathe upon them and make them live again (Ez. xxxvii.). On the other hand, when the grace of God has once effaced sin, no amount of later sin will revive the guilt or punishment of those already remitted. The gifts of God are without repentance. That which He has once bestowed, even when lost by us, remains in His treasury to be reclaimed when we will. The soul which, after an early period of fidelity, has gone off to wallow in the mire, and at last returns again to God, does not recommence as destitute and naked, but finds itself clothed again in the rejected robe of its earlier grace and merit. How profitable is the service of a God so generous! There is no waste, no frustration of effort, as there always is in the service of self, and the world, and Satan. Lay up then supernatural treasures, which even the rust and moth of sin can never utterly destroy, except in hell.

III. When the sinner returns to God, the period of infidelity drops out of his life and is no more remembered. It is a blank. There remains "nothing of condemnation," and also nothing of merit from that period. That which was earlier, however, remains intact. Thus the state of grace, though liable to be lost, and even though actually lost, deserves to be called in a sense the state of immortal and eternal life. The repentant sinner further receives graces to cast off the yoke, to retrieve the disgrace of defeat, and to retake the lost citadel, a more difficult task than holding it. In him, therefore, God is more honoured, His power is more fully exhibited, and the angels rejoice more over him, than over the ninety-nine just. The repentant sinner stands at his high-water mark; at a higher point of merit than any before attained. "God is not unjust that He should forget your work" (Heb. vi. 10). How merciful is this dispensation in which all seems to be accommodated to the wilfulness of man, and arranged for the special benefit of the sinner! Never cease praising God for this.

22.—CONTRITION.

I. Sorrow for sin is the first of the three elements in the Sacrament of Penance, and the most necessary, for it is the virtue of Penance reduced to action. Without true sorrow there can be no forgiveness of sin, and no validity in the sacramental forms; the confession, however accurate, is worthless; the sacred words of absolution are null and void; there is no sacrament, but sacrilege instead. Sin is primarily an act of the soul; consciousness and deliberate intent are necessary for responsibility; and conversely the action of the intelligence and will are the primary requirement for the reversal of sin; and without this action, any external ceremony is simply worthless, even though it be of divine institution like the sacrifices of the Jewish temple. Sorrow for sin is the human atonement to God; it is the best that man can offer; it is all that God strictly requires. Our sorrow is indeed defective and inefficacious by itself; but its union with the penance and atonement of Christ by means of the Sacrament of Penance, gives it a new value, and makes it available unto the remission of sin. Sorrow for sin is one of the great duties owing to God by man; it arises out of his offences, and should be proportioned to them. Cultivate a continual sense of your wickedness and of sorrow for it, and frequently bring it into union with Christ's atonement by means of the sacrament.

II. The highest form of sorrow for sin is Contrition, in the strict sense of the word. This is a sorrow for sin which regards God primarily. It dwells on the perfections of God, His sanctity, His authority, His goodness; it regards sin as an ingratitude and an outrage against Him; as a violation of supreme law and order, and essentially evil in itself; it considers what God deserves from us; and it is conjoined

with love of God for His own sake. The qualities of true contrition are that it be, 1. Supernatural; proceeding from an impulse of divine grace, and suggested by motives made known to us by revelation. 2. Universal, as extending to all mortal sins. There is no such thing as repenting supernaturally of one sin and not of another. We cannot be rebels against God in one province, and His allies in another. So long as we adhere to one mortal sin we remain impenitent as to all the others. 3. Supreme. It regards sin as the greatest of all evils, and is prepared to encounter all loss and suffering rather than offend God. Let there be no rapine from your holocaust. Indulge no lingering affection for any sin, no thought of self-interest in renouncing them. Never look back after putting your hand to the plough.

III. The efficiency of perfect Contrition is very great. It supplies for every kind of defect. It is the essence of penance; and, like the Baptism of Desire, it suffices even without sacramental absolution if the desire for it be present, at least implicitly. The Old Testament shows us what contrition can do in the New. As soon as David said: "I have sinned against the Lord," the prophet replied, "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die" (2 Kings xii. 13). And by another prophet the Lord spoke: "If I shall say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and he do penance for his sin . . . he shall surely live and not die. None of his sins which he hath committed shall be imputed to him: he hath done judgment and justice; he shall surely live" (Ez. xxxiii. 14-16). This is the case with any contrition for sin, however feeble, provided it be genuine. Contrition and love are adhesion to God, and therefore are a separation from sin. Every one of mankind has thus in his hands the means of attaining to forgiveness and salvation; and this, quite independently of outward circumstances, and even of the external ordinary aids of the divine system, if they are unavoidably outside his reach. Ask God to bestow the gift of contrition on you and all mankind.

23.—ATTRITION.

I. The same object may be looked at from different points of view. We may consider God objectively or from our subjective aspect, as He is in Himself or as He is towards us, as the Supreme Life or as our particular spiritual life, as the Infinite and Perfect who transcends all things, or as the source of our individual perfection and happiness. Parallel to the aspects of God are the aspects of sin. We may take it as an outrage against the Supreme Majesty and highest Law, or as the cause of personal evils, intense and eternal. Hence the two kinds of sorrow of sin, Contrition and Attrition. There is much in common between the two. Each is supernatural; each has the same ultimate object, *viz.*, God as the source of the supernatural order and of salvation; each rests on motives made known by faith; each includes love, *i.e.*, adhesion to Life and striving for its maintenance. But there are important differences between Contrition and Attrition. The one looks at sin from the point of view of God, the other from the point of view of man; the one looks to God directly in Himself, the other indirectly through our own hopes and fears; the one is inspired by love of the absolute infinite Life, the other by love of the communicated life which we possess; one is more disinterested, the other more personal. Contrition is primarily a love which leads to affliction: Attrition is an affliction which leads to love. You are happy if you have Attrition even; but aspire to the highest sorrow and love.

II. Attrition is by no means so perfect a form of sorrow as Contrition. Though hope and fear must be united, yet it is better for hope to predominate over fear; and Attrition leans rather towards fear, while Contrition leans more to that perfect love which casteth out fear. Attrition regards God more as the stern Judge; Contrition, as the injured Father.

Contrition detests sin as offending God; Attrition, as injuring self, the creature. Attrition, however, is ultimately and substantially an adhesion to God, even though it be indirectly. Contrition and Attrition are equally available in union with the external sacramental rite instituted by Our Lord. But the more perfect sorrow has this advantage over the inferior, that it is capable of obtaining forgiveness with the mere implicit desire of the Sacrament. Take care that your sorrow be not mere servile fear that thinks only of self and personal consequences; or merely a natural sorrow for the punishments of sin. Such sorrow is quite worthless.

III. As we are so unspiritual and coarse-minded, it is easier for us to acquire the lower dispositions than the higher. We must not set aside any influence that helps us towards a better life, even if it be of a kind that appeals more to grosser minds. We are imperfect enough to stand in need of the lower motives; and we shall be more sure of having sufficient dispositions for the Sacrament of Penance if we cultivate the easier as well as the more difficult ones. Even though our contrition and love be genuine, the thought of our personal advantage and personal perils must help to confirm our good resolutions and restrain us in the moment of temptation. While we aspire to the highest dispositions, we must remember that our degree of grace and habits of virtue may be inadequate for such pretensions. God has lowered His requirements in consideration of our weakness; we must not be above availing ourselves of His condescension, as if we did not require it. Sin is both an offence against God, and an injury to man naturally and supernaturally; we may well take account of its double character in exciting ourselves to detest it. Our Lord Himself puts both classes of motives before us: He has taught us the highest love of God, but He reminds us of His terrors. Dwell upon His tender affection, but do not forget His terrible threats.

24.—THE INSTITUTION OF CONFESSION.

I. Our Lord does not engage visibly in the external administration of His Church. He commits this duty to the charge of weak and erring men, with the assurance, however, of His guidance to them, and of our security in obeying them. "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke x. 16). The Apostle says therefore, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1). And again: God "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . . . For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us" (2 Cor. v. 18, 20). Men are the ministers of God towards men in all things, as ruling, teaching, giving daily bread, administering the divine gifts of justice, order, and truth; and in the spiritual sphere as conferring Baptism, and communicating the Holy Ghost, the bread of the word, and the bread of the Blessed Sacrament. It is in harmony with all this that confession of sin should be made to certain delegated men, and forgiveness conveyed through their ministry. The spirit of pride spoke in the Pharisees when they said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke v. 21). Our Lord, in asserting that power for Himself without declaring Himself to be God the Son, lays down the principle that underlies the practice of confession, *viz.*, that God has the power to delegate men to convey His forgiveness of sins. Greater is this spiritual authority than that of all monarchs or leaders of men. Glorify "God who gave such power to men" (Matt. ix. 8).

II. The office of the confessor in the Christian Church is clearly indicated in the Old Testament. Leprosy was a special figure of sin, both for the loathsomeness of the disease, the social excommunication it induced, and the ceremonies that accompanied its cure. One of the offices of the priest-

hood was to take cognizance of such cases, to bind and loose, to separate from and readmit to human society. In doubtful cases the people were bidden to go to the priests, and ask of them the truth, and abide by their decisions. And the law added: "He that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest who ministereth at that time to the Lord thy God . . . that man shall die . . . and all the people hearing it shall fear" (Deut. xvii. 12, 13). The prophet Nathan was delegated by God to receive the confession of David and pronounce sentence of forgiveness. Our Lord spoke a word which applied both to physical and moral leprosy. "Go, show thyself to the priest" (Matt. viii. 4). He had cured the leper by His own power; He Himself was God, to whom all the credit was due; yet He pointed out that certain men had functions and claims in the matter, which had to be respected because conferred by God. You have a better priesthood, and owe greater deference to their authority.

III. The saving power thus foreshadowed was solemnly delegated by Christ Our Lord to the dispensers of His mysteries. "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. . . . Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained" (John xx. 21-23). God gives special graces proportioned to special duties; and so, for this most critical office, He prepares His ministers in advance, and strengthens them and enlightens them continually. They need judgment and counsel and wisdom for discerning between sin and sin, for interpreting the law of God, for weighing the dispositions of the penitents, penetrating through self-deception, reproving and advising, for inspiring confidence, observing the seal of secrecy, maintaining the dignity of the office, conveying consolation and peace in the name of Jesus Christ. Pay homage to God by revering the authority which He has delegated. Thank Him for the grace and comfort thereby conveyed to you.

25.—UTILITIES OF CONFESSION.

I. Sin is a revolt against God, an assertion of our independence against Him, an act of arrogance and pride. The adequate reaction that corresponds to it is humiliation, the bending of the stiff neck, the offering of a contrite spirit. The principal form of humiliation proceeding immediately from sin is the manifestation to oneself and others of its horror and shamefulness. This is the consequence and one of the punishments of sin: "For there is nothing hid that shall not be made manifest" (Mark iv. 22). Unforgiven sins will be manifested to all men at the day of judgment; and the full knowledge of them in all their bearings will be the chief element of the worm of conscience that never dieth. A recognition and modified manifestation of sin would be the proper form for the sinner's voluntary atonement to take. As conquered rebels of old knelt before their lord with bared head and ropes round their necks, offering themselves for punishment that they might escape it; so man submits himself to an ordeal now which takes the place of the manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10). The Apostle says: "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged" (1 Cor. xi. 31). By confession we show ourselves to be conscious of guilt, judge ourselves deserving of punishment, and so, fitly prepare the way for forgiveness. Thank God for accepting a small humiliation from you instead of that which is due. Indeed "it is good for me that Thou hast humbled me" (Ps. cxviii. 71).

II. It is fitting that the manifestation of our guilt should take place before men like the confession of those who came to St. John (Matt. iii. 6) and the Apostles (Acts xix. 18). For 1. Men are appointed to administer the kingdom of God

on earth in His name. 2. We have sinned before men, insulted God before them, scandalized them; we should likewise humble ourselves to God before them. It would not be an adequate manifestation to confess only before God, who already knows our misdeeds, and maintain an undeserved repute before men. It is said: "Confess, therefore, your sins one to another . . . that you may be saved" (Jas. v. 16). 3. Each sin has offended against human society as well as God. "I have sinned against heaven and before thee" (Luke xv. 21). We have added to the sum of human miseries, and we owe a reparation to men. God mercifully allows us to purge our offence in secret before a single representative of Himself and human society. There is merciful consideration also for us in the fact that the delegated judge is a sinner like ourselves, tempted in all things as we are, who can have compassion on our infirmities. Thank God for this institution, so just, and yet so tender to our susceptibilities.

III. There is even a natural utility in confession. 1. Many find relief in unburdening their souls, who do not know of the Sacrament of Penance. 2. It is considered a just thing and due to society that a criminal should confess his guilt before execution. Thus Josue said to Achan: "My son, give glory to the God of Israel, and confess, and tell me what thou hast done; hide it not" (Jos. vii. 19). 3. No judge or physician is a safe guide in his own case. Every man requires advice from unprejudiced persons; and especially is this the case in matters of conscience. The Sacrament of Penance is accommodated to our natural needs, and provides us with an official confidant, bound to impartiality and secrecy, and endowed with divine aid for his office. 4. Confession also secures to us self-knowledge, watchfulness over our lives, preparation against dangers, frequent repentance of every sin, and a check on gradual laxity. Thank God for these graces, so numerous, so comforting, and purchased at the cost of so slight a humiliation.

26.—SATISFACTION.

I. There is a third element of the Sacrament of Penance, *viz.*, Satisfaction. Satisfaction is a voluntary endurance of suffering, or doing of good, in order to expiate part of the consequences of sin. It is a kind of penalty for sin, completing the form of a judicial trial in the Sacrament of Penance. This Satisfaction or penalty is spoken of as "the penance" in a third sense of the word. The Satisfaction makes the difference between the restitution of the sinner in the Sacrament of Penance, and the regeneration which takes place in Baptism. Our first deliverance from that Original Sin which was incurred without personal guilt, requires less in the way of preparatory dispositions, and nothing in the way of Satisfaction. The spiritual effect is completed at once, and heaven is opened straightway. No partial expiation remains to be accomplished by satisfaction here or purgatory hereafter. But after deliberate infidelity and backsliding, more is required of us in the way of preparatory dispositions and works of atonement. We may compare this with the grant of the Law of God to Moses. On the first occasion God provided the stone tablets of the law; but when these had been destroyed through the idolatry of the Israelites, it was required that Moses should hew two other tablets, and carry them up to the summit to receive the law for the second time. Do not forget your increased liability. It is a debt that remains on you, and is not fully defrayed in the Sacrament of Penance.

II. We are not altogether delivered from the consequences of sin after it has been forgiven. Our repentance does not of its own nature interfere with the course of law and penalty. None can say: "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" (Eccli. v. 4). Even the fulness

of Christ's satisfaction does not preclude all satisfaction on our part. We are not dumb beasts, to have everything done by another, but we are free agents whose co-operation is required in all that is done for us. Our Lord wrought our salvation, but we have to work it out, nevertheless, in fear and trembling. He does not simply act for us, but with us. His atoning sufferings are an example for us, and not an exemption. Experience shows us that, like Christ, all have to bear a share in the burdens of sin. To profit by the satisfactions of Jesus, we have to cast our satisfactions into the great store of human merits and satisfactions in union with His, and then we draw forth, as our share of the total, infinitely more than we contributed. Each one has to bear his own burden proportionately; but his proportion is infinitesimally small on account of the great proportion taken by Christ. Imitate St. Paul, who said, I "rejoice in my sufferings . . . and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh" (Col. i. 24).

III. Satisfaction, when it is an element of the Sacrament, is endued with a special efficiency for its purpose; for it depends then, not on the measure of our dispositions, but on the action of Christ's grace in the Sacrament. The ordinary satisfactory value of a prayer is greatly enhanced when it is assigned as a penance in confession; we should desire then to have this sacramental seal set upon prayers and good works as largely as possible. The penance given in confession is also remedial, it provides us with an antidote against further sins, it checks the formation of evil habits by reminding us of its penalties. If you are generous of soul, you will endeavour to make atonement, not merely as a condition of forgiveness, but as a free offering in testimony of your sorrow. Say: "I have sinned; what shall I do to Thee, O keeper of men?" (Job vii. 20). As you have contributed to the sum of sin which Jesus bore, contribute as much as you can to the sum of satisfaction which He, in union with humanity, offers to the Father.

27.—LIABILITIES AFTER FORGIVENESS.

I. In its effect sin is like a wound. First there is the open gash drawing away the life-blood; this closes, the mortal danger ceases, but a crusted cicatrice remains; after it has healed, there is still a scar left, which is disfiguring although not dangerous. So after the mortal guilt of sin has been remitted, there remain certain vestiges of sin, the habit or inclination to repeat it, and noxious impressions which remain in the character as they do in the brain cells. To efface all this is a work of time. New tendencies have to be nurtured till virtue becomes a spontaneous instead of a forced growth, new impressions must overgrow the old, both in the physical and the spiritual being. This cannot be done in a moment. There may indeed be a degree of grief which is adequate punishment in itself, and of love uniting so closely with God as to destroy at once all that is alien to Him in the soul. But normally, growth is slow. The tree felled in a day cannot be replaced for centuries. Many graces of action, many infusions of sanctifying grace, many sacraments are needed for the rehabilitation of the soul. You may be sure that you have much work of this kind to do. Continue for ever paying off your debts and effacing the traces of sin in your soul. You can never do too much. "Be not afraid to be justified even to death" (Eccli. xviii. 22).

II. The sorrow and love of a repentant sinner can rarely be so perfect as to make him at once fit for heaven. In the Sacrament of Penance we receive at least what is absolutely necessary for salvation, *viz.*, the remission of the guilt and of the eternal consequences of mortal sin; but a certain portion of the temporal effect of sin remains with us by way of retribution for sin; this is our share of the expiation. Thus was the child of David's sin taken from him

after the sin itself had been forgiven (2 Kings xii. 13, 14). There is an expiatory or satisfactory value in every prayer or good deed of ours; the same compensating merit is found in all the sufferings of life, which are for the most part the working out of the destructive energies of sin. The expiation by suffering is analogous to punishment, although not exactly the same as the punishments of human law. It is medicinal, it cures the soul of its disorders, it obliterates the foot-prints of sin, it detaches from the world and its pleasures, and draws the soul to God. You must be tried like gold in the furnace of tribulation till your dross is all purged away. Turn all your sorrows and troubles to this object, and they will prove to be of incalculable value.

III. Perfect contrition is rare, satisfaction for sin is little practised, defects of character are numerous, selfishness and worldliness are deeply rooted; even the holiest are not thoroughly purified from all the remains of sin when they pass from this life. There is still a slight defilement which is an obstacle to their entering heaven. They are in the grace of God and therefore cannot enter into the state of eternal hostility to Him. Yet past sins have not exhausted their force upon them; they still partially incapacitate these souls for the full vision and enjoyment of the God of perfect purity and sanctity. So it was with Absalom, who was allowed to enter the royal city, but for two years was excluded from David's presence (2 Kings xiv. 28). Such souls must undergo a purgation in the next world, if it has not taken place in this; for the law of cause and effect is not suspended in the soul by the accident of death. There are no sacraments hereafter to intensify the effect of good works, there is no satisfactory merit then in prayers and desires; sin works its effects, *i.e.*, suffering rigidly, in accordance with law. They "shall be saved yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 15). That expiation will be longer and more bitter than any on earth. Endeavour to expiate your sins now by works of mercy and mortification.

28.—PURGATORY.

I. Purgatory, like all other doctrines, is marked by its beautiful harmony with God's other works and His divine perfections. It is a marvel of justice and regular law. Purgatory is the prison of the great King, and "thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (Matt. v. 26). Thus no one escapes the consequences of his evil deeds by a fortunately premature death. There is a continuity of cause and effect that is not broken by passing into the other world; the force of a man's misdeeds, so far from being checked by sudden interference, works itself out upon him to the last. So does God in the natural sequence of events render to every man exactly according to his deeds. The deliberate sinner, forgiven before his death, does not go scot free, rejoicing that he has outwitted divine justice, and that his life of self-indulgence has ended no otherwise than the life of the ascetic and the apostle and the martyr. How terrible will be that exact retribution when each will reap what he has sown! Be sure that every sin will one day find you out. "We know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that do such things. And thinkest thou this, O man . . . that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. ii. 2, 3).

II. Purgatory is a marvel of God's forbearing mercy towards men. God is for ever intercepting souls on the downward path, and giving them new chances when they forfeit the earlier ones. First came the state of original justice. This being lost, God supplied its place through the merits of Christ communicated to us under the present dispensation by Baptism. Some cannot receive Baptism; then the desire, even the implicit desire, is taken as its

equivalent. Even after Baptism most men fall away; yet there is reparation and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance; and this not once only, but many times over. Finally, we have the graces of the Last Sacraments. Even so, many are still unfit for heaven; yet they are not cast off. Provided they have in some way turned towards God, there is Purgatory to complete the unfinished work as a Sacrament of suffering. This is most comforting for us who know our own shortcomings and dread them; it affords us unfailing hope as to those who, we know, have not accomplished in this life the full duty of preparation for the next; above all it is a happiness for those who have been snatched like brands from the burning, and who know that their entrance into glory, although delayed, is absolutely certain. Glorify God for this final and crowning one of His mercies.

III. This doctrine harmonizes beautifully with the Communion of Saints, and the corporate character of the faithful, who participate, each one, in the prayers and merits of all the others. As men in natural society are continually acting and reacting on one another in every possible way, so the Church Militant, the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant, exhibit their unity in Christ by a continual exchange of good offices. The souls departed, like those on earth, participate in the merits of the whole community of Christ's kingdom. We can share in their expiation by our prayers and sufferings. They cry aloud to us, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job xix. 21). We have the opportunity of practising works of mercy which are more beneficial and more urgently desired than any relief to those stricken by famine, or disease, or earthquake, or conflagrations. You are bound to help all your brethren according to their needs and your own abilities. Help the suffering souls, and you will do a double act of satisfaction, expiating the temporal punishment due to their sins and to your own.

29.—INDULGENCES.

I. There are two things to be considered with regard to sin and its remission: 1. the guilt, with the naturally inexhaustible consequences or punishment; 2. the temporal or exhaustible impressions and punishments which survive its forgiveness, and which are expiated by works of satisfaction. In the Sacrament of Penance, the guilt and extreme penalty are remitted by the absolution; the penance imposed remits part of the temporal consequences; but there remains another part to be expiated by other good works. The wound has lost its mortal character, but some scars and blemishes remain. For the completion of the expiation, we are not left entirely to our own merits and sufferings; there is a further application of the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, which supplements the Sacrament of Penance, and this is the Indulgence. The power of binding and loosing in earth and heaven includes not only the greater power of remitting guilt, but the lesser and supplementary power of purging away the last remnants of sin. Indulgences are the necessary corollary of the Sacraments. How wonderfully God's care extends to all your needs! The blood of Jesus suffices for every purpose; it does not stop short of a completed work; and, through the medium of your good works, it is capable of saving you from all the penal consequences of sin.

II. Indulgence corresponds closely in its nature to Sacrament. It proceeds from Christ, but indirectly as involved in the power of the keys. It is applied to us through certain definite acts of prayer, etc.; and further, it has an efficacy of its own from Our Lord, through His Church, over and above the efficacy of our good works and interior dispositions. The Indulgence supplies what is deficient in us, enhances the intrinsic value of our prayers, and enables us to

"draw with joy from the Saviour's fountains" a much larger proportion of His satisfying merits. In this it resembles the Sacrament of Penance, which takes hold of Attrition, a disposition which does not suffice alone for the remission of mortal sins, and gives it the efficacy of contrition by virtue of its union with the other elements of the Sacrament. Again, like the Sacraments, Indulgences give us more certainty as to the reception of grace. Every prayer or good work partakes of the nature of Indulgence as having a satisfying value in addition to its other qualities: but the authoritative grant of an indulgence by the Church increases the satisfactory value of the same works, and appoints a maximum which may be attained if our dispositions are raised to their maximum power. Thus you may acquit yourself of all your debts to divine justice, and enter without purgatory into beatitude. Do not neglect these splendid facilities.

III. The graces conveyed in Indulgences are said to come from "the treasury of the Church." Each one of the community, including Our Lord, shares in the deeds of each and all. He contributes most of the merits, we draw most of the profit. As He, being one of mankind, applies His infinite merits to His brethren; so we can apply our scanty merits, when made valuable through those of Christ, to the benefit of others; we may intercede for them and offer our satisfactions for them, *i.e.*, indulgences. As individuals are able to do this, the community may also do so with its common goods; in other words the administrators of Christ's kingdom on earth may direct the application of spiritual goods either to living men or to the souls of the departed in purgatory. It is sad that so many should be ignorant or indifferent to the great treasury of merits which belong to them as members of the corporate Christian unity. They are like savages who live miserably in a land abounding in mineral wealth. By indulgences you may raise these treasures to the surface, to the great spiritual gain of yourself, and of others on earth and in purgatory.

30.—EXTREME UNCTION.

I. The most important moment of life is the last one. A good beginning avails nothing unless it be followed by a good ending; on the other hand a good death will remedy all the deficiencies and sins of a life-time. Judas began well and ended badly; the penitent thief ended well and retrieved the past. The last moment is the point to which all the threads of life converge, and from which the future life begins and takes its character. The myriad graces and actions of a life-time sum up all their effects in the moment before death, and the net resultant of these forces determines our eternal weal or woe. Everything in life becomes to us then either an assistance or a danger. How much we shall stand in need of special strength and guidance! The last moment is the most anxious and thrilling moment of life. A few minutes more, and the impenetrable secret will be unveiled to our eyes, the great problems of life will suddenly be solved, the supreme question of our destiny will be irrevocably determined. We shall be cut adrift from the whole world that we know, from all that we value, friends, possessions, occupations; we shall enter on an existence that we cannot now picture to ourselves, where there is neither time nor space, where all our present senses will cease, where God will be all in all. How important must be the sacrament which is adapted for such a crisis! Thank God for it; and pray unceasingly that you may have the happiness of receiving it at the end.

II. There are special perils and needs which render our passing from life to death still more critical. 1. We shall be under the influence of pain and sickness, our powers will be enfeebled, our attention will wander, we shall be tempted to querulousness, selfishness, want of resignation, we shall not be able to devote ourselves fully to the work of preparation. 2. The sins of the past will be a source of trouble. On the one hand we may neglect to

recall them and repent; on the other we may find their memory too vivid, and the momentum of their habits overpowering; or further, the sight of our unfaithfulness and of harm done to others, the absence of merit in us, and our unfitness to appear before God, may induce a terrible uncertainty as to our standing, and lead us to discouragement, loss of confidence in God, and despair. 3. The great conflict between good and evil will culminate in our souls at that moment; the habits we have formed will assert themselves as a second nature; Satan will make his last and greatest effort for our destruction. In this time of anxiety and danger we shall need all our vigilance and strength, all the reserve of graces from previous good works. Prepare for it now, lest it should be your lot to die without Extreme Unction. "In the day of good things be not unmindful of evils" (Eccli. xi. 27).

III. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction contains all the graces we shall require at death. It increases the habit of sanctifying grace in the soul and the claim to graces of action; it imparts fortitude, courage, strength, resignation, confidence, and a peacefulness that quiets all the emotions and conduces even to bodily improvement; it delivers us from the remnants of sin, its deleterious memories, and our liability to be drawn into it again. Further, Extreme Unction forgives sin, when through failure of speech or of consciousness, or through oversight or want of sorrow, it may not have been forgiven in the ordinary way. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him" (Jas. v. 15). Pray daily for the crowning grace of a happy and well-prepared death. Commend yourself to the prayers of the Blessed Mother of God, St. Joseph, the penitent thief, whose deaths were specially blessed by Our Lord and Saviour. "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them" (Num. xxiii. 10).

31.—HOLY ORDERS.

I. Consider what is involved in the administration of the kingdom of God on earth. The Church is the instrument of God's operations among men, and she carries them out by means of certain selected ones of her members. Their duties are the consecration, distribution and guardianship of the Body of Christ, the enrolling of new members, the conferring of the Holy Ghost, the forgiveness of sins and conveyance of other graces, the task of instructing with the guarantee of inerrancy, and with an authority that men may reasonably bow to. No self-appointment or human appointment can convey these powers; they can come only from the original appointment by God and direct transmission from hand to hand. God has not left the pastorate and government of His Church to human initiative. He has Himself given it its constitution, assured it of His continual presence, promised it infallibility and indefectibility. These gifts and graces and duties cannot be claimed by any man at his fancy, but only by him "that is called by God as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 4), and who is indued with them by the Sacrament of Holy Order. Thank God for the great powers thus communicated, and venerate the recipients of them.

II. The Church of Christ is also an organization of mankind for the purpose of welding all conditions and all nations into a spiritual unity on earth, and bringing them to one end, union with God hereafter. Men are a vast multitude, variously endowed, so as to require and to render various temporal and spiritual services one to another. Rich and poor, savage and civilized, the wicked and the good must have their relations to one another duly guided. Further, there is a body of truths to be taught and investigated, a code of laws to be administered, forms of worship to be celebrated. The Christian spirit puts out its energies through a thousand channels for the service of God and of mankind, it has to encounter new shapes of error, new abuses, new

kinds of persecution. The spiritual work is carried out by bodily efforts and material instruments ; it involves combination and joint action, division of labour, differences of training, the collection and distribution of wealth. It must have large departments for worship, instruction, relief of the poor and sick, the care of criminals and the abandoned, the conversion of infidels. It touches at some point or other every branch of human life, commerce, politics, art, science, literature. Those called to office in the Church may well say : " Thy servant is in the midst of the people which Thou hast chosen. . . . Who shall be able to judge this people, Thy people which is so numerous ? " And by Holy Orders God does for them as for Solomon ; " Behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart " (3 Kings iii. 8, 9, 12). Thus He fits them for their duties.

III. Such a system requires, besides inward grace, a uniform and coherent organization, a fixed form of government, an authority which can command respect. Without this the Christian community would be an anarchy, an undisciplined mob and not a kingdom ; it would have no capacity for united effort, no definite voice or action ; well-meaning individuals would work at random, squandering energy, doubling labour sometimes, and at other times neutralizing one another's efforts. Jesus Christ provided a hierarchical organization in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. " He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, . . . for the work of the ministry . . . until we all meet into the unity of faith " (Eph. iv. 11-13). The parish has one head in its priest, the diocese in the Bishop, the province in the Archbishop, the nation in the Primate, the rite or the group of nations in the Patriarch, the whole Church in Peter and his successors. This host of God is " terrible as an army set in array " (Cant. vi. 3). Be loyal and obedient to it.

32.—THE PRIESTHOOD.

I. The predominant note that characterizes all the sacred Orders is Sacrifice. The hierarchy of the Church are not so much elders, or teachers, or rulers, or philanthropists, or judges, as sacrificing priests. The lesser orders have reference to the sacrifice of the Mass; the Episcopate is only the fulness of the priesthood, as including the power of ordaining others to the priestly office; the supreme head of the Church receives no further consecration or priestly powers, but only the plenitude of jurisdiction. A mere superintendent or elder might conceivably be appointed by the community or the civil power; some might well devote themselves to the study of the law, and become recognized teachers, like the Rabbis and Scribes of old; some of the Sacraments, *viz.*, Baptism and Matrimony, can be conferred by ordinary persons; public prayers may be read by any one; but the power of consecrating the Body of the Lord, and offering the Eternal Sacrifice in union with Christ on Calvary is one that can come only by direct transmission from Christ through the proper form appointed by Him. Not all the powers of earth can communicate this singular gift and make a man into priest or bishop: "neither doth any man take the honour to himself but he that is called by God" (Heb. v. 4). What a high dignity God has conferred on those whom He has set over us! How great the graces conferred with such an office!

II. In the Old Testament the priestly office was conveyed to Aaron and his sons, by consecration at the hands of Moses acting as the delegate of God. In the Church great works of every kind have been carried out by men and women who have been conscious of the divine afflatus, and have declared themselves to be called by God. Some of the

great religious orders were founded by laics or women. But the priesthood is different; it was instituted by the Son of God Himself, and has come down to us by an unbroken succession from the imposition of His divine hands. Ordination transmits the chief characteristic of Jesus Christ. The central event of His life, surpassing His preaching and miracles and virtues, was His death on Calvary. He is, above all, the priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec. Every quality of His has to be reproduced in human lives, His beneficence, His power in speech, His kingship, His sufferings, His miracles even; but the highest is that which is reproduced in those who offer His Sacrifice with Him. This function is higher than that of Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, the prophets. St. John the Baptist was greater than all born of women, yet "he that is lesser in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke vii. 28). The daily consecration on the altar may be compared to the office of the Holy Virgin; it is a temporal parallel to the action of the Eternal Father in producing for ever the Second Person of the Trinity. What a glory to the human race that some should hold this power! What a privilege to belong to such a Church!

III. How singular, how holy, how great is this power! The divine right of kings is nothing as compared with the divine right of the priesthood. Descent from ancient princes, from conquering tribes, from great nations, is nothing as compared with the priestly descent from Jesus Christ. The power of life and death is not to be compared with the power of restoring life to the souls of men. No work is so noble as that of co-operating with the Saviour of the world in His great office of atonement, saving sinners and glorifying the Father. No science is so important as that which the priesthood have to teach all nations. What sanctity befits that state! Pray God to multiply and sanctify His ministers, to give power to their words and success to their endeavours, for the glory of His holy name.

33.—THE CONJUGAL STATE.

I. Life is the great fact of all existence; the tendency towards life is the greatest of all forces; the maintenance of life is the first of all laws; and the tendency towards the life of the species is even stronger than the tendency towards the individual life. Such a force, if perverted, must have a most pernicious effect; such a law if violated must have a terrible punishment. In inferior nature this impulse acts harmoniously and beneficially; in mankind this function, though noble and comparable to God's creative power, "from whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15) is greatly abused and has most destructive consequences. The first effect of original sin as embodied in the Curse was in the relation of the sexes and the reproduction of the species. Adam's choice of the natural over the supernatural plane of existence showed itself in the dominance of nature in the carrying out of the first law of being. The originating of natural life became the transmission of supernatural death. The command to increase and multiply, which is the condition of life and progress, of glory to God and happiness in heaven for myriads, has been perverted into the most fruitful source of conflict, cruelty, misery, degradation and eternal loss. God has given laws to regulate the great functions of life; they are necessary not only for the supernatural life, but for the due observance of the most natural of nature's laws.

II. The life of the intelligence leads directly to the formation of organized society, and the first society is that of the family. Marriage is the entrance into domestic society, the beginning of all permanent relations among mankind, and one of the great differences between human life and brute life. All mankind pass through the domestic

stage as children, and most of them as parents. The influence of the family on the individual is the first and most enduring; more so even than that of the greater societies, Religion and the State. The character of these two depends on the character of the family. National character depends more on family discipline than on the civil constitution; and the mothers of a generation are of more importance than a dynasty of kings. The family is the unit which, when multiplied, makes up the nation and humanity. If the family influence be evil, no code of laws can rectify it. Law steps in only after the character is formed; and then only to punish the irregularities of early education. How much need there is of a special institution, a Sacrament, to stand at the portal of domestic life and infuse the aiding graces of God!

III. The conjugal state, beautiful as it is, divine and natural in its inception, is beset with difficulties and responsibilities. Its true basis is not mere animal impulse, as in the lower creation, but love, which is a participation in one of the great perfections of the Divine Spirit, and also a natural human impulse sublimated by reason and grace. Love is naturally evanescent; but the order of society requires that it be permanent; and it can be made so only by supernatural aid. There is a difficulty in keeping the animal element of it in due subordination. There is a difficulty in making a wise choice, and in subduing selfishness, and in maintaining generosity, forbearance, and constancy. There are the cares and responsibilities of children, and the difficulty of educating them in proper dutifulness to their parents, and to the divine and civil law. Happiness in family life counterbalances most of the evils of life; married unhappiness can be counterbalanced by nothing else in the world. How can any dare to enter on such a state without the blessing of God and high principle! How dangerous to be actuated by low motives of levity, ambition or sensuality, instead of duty to God and society!

34.—CHRISTIAN MATRIMONY.

I. As compared with the priesthood, marriage is a lowly state. It is a matter of common ordinary life. The effect of the Sacrament on it is not the originating of a new supernatural life, but the sanctification of that which lies on the natural plane. Yet St. Paul magnifies Christian marriage in a unique phrase; he compares it to the union of Christ with His Church and adds, "This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Eph. v. 25, 32). There is a special fitness in the elevation of the natural contract to the dignity of a sacrament, on account of its great importance and universal influence. Christ blessed the propagation of the species under the New Dispensation, in order to counterbalance the curse pronounced in Genesis. The Sacrament of Matrimony, though it does not transmit supernatural life to the offspring, is a guarantee of that blessing to follow, and of the graces that will make children into members of Christ's kingdom. A special blessing was further needed, as the conditions of the married life had been made more onerous than before. Matrimony was restored to its pristine integrity, and made one and indissoluble. The corruption and hard hearts of the Jews, and their fall below the divine ideal had introduced polygamy and divorce, but "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. xix. 8). Happy is the generation which receives this word! Pray God to enlighten the minds of so-called Christians who receive it not.

II. The Sacrament of Matrimony is a most important agent in raising mankind from the natural to the supernatural level; it insures the just influence of rational considerations and spiritual ones. It is eminently a supernatural institution adapted to the Christian system of life.

It is no more adapted to the material and pagan plane of life than to that of the brute beasts. Christian marriage is a security for domestic and social good order, on account of its restraints and its graces; but in an unchristian epoch the restraints are too grievous, the graces which balance them are rejected and the advantages of both are lost. The conditions of Christian marriage cannot be engrafted on an animal system of life; they become inharmonious, inoperative and unendurable; they are like the new patch on the old garment. How blind men are to their highest social interests and happiness! They cast aside the divine safeguards, and turn God's precious gifts to their own misery; and then they blame the law itself for the evils that they induce by disobeying it.

III. The result of breaking a fundamental law of society must be the ruin of society. If the due restraint of the spirit and of reason on human activities be withdrawn, there is nothing to prevent men from degenerating to the level of the brute creation. As soon as the laws of Christian marriage are relaxed, a general deterioration of morals follows; family life becomes corrupt, God-like love ceases, animal passion remains, but without the moderation which instinct teaches the irrational animals; the primal unity and stability are destroyed, and civilized society gravitates towards the promiscuity and anarchy of a horde of swine. The reaction on the general life of the community is rapid. Selfish lust becomes dominant, the influx of God's grace is stopped, wisdom is turned into folly, principle begins to waver, physical stamina declines, government becomes unstable, liberty is undermined, population falls off, the nation becomes enslaved to foreign or domestic foes, to financial rings and greedy adventurers. Pure family life based on Christianity is the only safeguard for spiritual, moral and social welfare. "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men" (Wisd. iv. 1).

MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

TREATISE XVI.

THE LAST THINGS.

1.—DEATH.

I. Consider the position of death in the present economy of human development. The human body, as being compounded of matter, was of its own nature subject to change, dissolution, and the revival of its atoms in new combinations. Only Supreme Infinite Life is permanent. But God raised man in Paradise above the rest of creation. By imparting supernatural life He raised matter in man to a certain union with the Divinity. He gave man an immortal soul, not as an evolution of anterior life, but as an extraneous gift from Himself. "He breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). The immortal superior life carried with it the permanence of the material life. Man was to survive in his entirety. The sin of Adam disorganized all this. The supernatural life was the keystone of the arch, keeping every other element in its place; that being lost, the cohesion of the rest ceased, the system collapsed, man fell to the lower natural state. "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). The supernatural life is indeed reconveyed to us, but without fixity of tenure, and with only the reversion of immortality. The body must be resolved and remade again, in order that the taint of sin be thoroughly eliminated. Submit humbly to the decree of death.

II. Death has this important significance, that it is the end of the probation of man in his entirety as a complexus of body and soul. It puts an end to the compounded action of man; to the conveyance of impressions to the soul through senses, nerves, and brain, and to the return action of the soul on the material environment. The senses cease to act, man is withdrawn from his present sphere of activity, and from the conflict of contending elements in him by which he classes himself on the side of good or of evil. All the conditions of life are changed; there is no more struggle; the motives of good and evil have ceased to act;

the instability arising from the delusions of sense, the attraction of external objects, the difficulties of virtue, the physical constitution, have come to an end. Opposition to God ceases to be a ground for further penalty; adhesion to God merits no further glory. The moment before death has set the last stone on the edifice of character. The night has come in which no man can work. No further action influences his destiny; all later action is in strict accordance with his antecedents. "If the tree fall to the south or to the north in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be" (Eccles. xi. 3). How important it is to make use of the present time when every action is efficient, and to prepare for the last moment, that you may then be found in the state of grace!

III. For the just man death is a rehabilitation. So deeply is the impression of sin embedded in brain and nerve; so deeply are the appetites affected by it, that any superficial cleansing is worthless. The whole being must be recreated, so that the regenerated soul may be appropriately housed in its body. That which is corporeal in us has to be in some way purged of its grossness; our bodily substance will take some form that does not prevail in the present state of this earth; matter may be reduced perhaps to some such condition as science has been able to conjecture, but cannot isolate for inspection. We shall be spiritualized and made capable of existing on the plane of a higher life. Thus the curse of death pronounced by God on humanity is, by His goodness, not a real evil, but a mere penal consequence converted by Him into a benefit. Regard death as the gate of happiness and life, as well as a punishment and the end of life. Submit in fear and humility, but mingle hope and joy therewith. Sin is the only evil element in death: subdue it thoroughly and you have triumphed over death though subject to it. You can say: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. xv. 55).

2.—THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

I. At the moment of death all is over; man is fixed for ever in grace or hostility to God; his destiny is determined and is unchangeable. This is necessarily known to the person most concerned; his state is manifested to him and his future lot. This is the particular judgment which takes place at each man's death, and which anticipates that of the last day. Such is the general belief of the Church from at least the days of St. Augustine down to the present. This accords with Holy Scripture: "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). "It is easy before God in the day of death to reward every one according to his ways. . . . In the end of a man is the disclosing of his works" (Eccli. xi. 28, 29). Those who have been snatched from the jaws of death often say of that critical moment that their "whole life flashed before them." Every impression made upon the brain during life is of a sudden vividly reproduced, and the conscious soul takes them all in. In almost a literal physical sense the book is opened, and the writing upon it stands forth legibly. This perception of facts, with the knowledge of their true nature and their effects, taking place in the upper world in the sight of God, this is substantially the judgment and sentence on the soul. You are accumulating every day the materials for that judgment. It may come at any moment. What record have you already written?

II. We may reasonably conjecture some of the circumstances of the particular judgment for our spiritual profit. It will take place as soon as the soul goes forth from the body. Although we do not know what relation the disembodied spirit has to place, we may nevertheless represent the judgment to ourselves as occurring at the very place of

death, in presence of the dead body and the mourners who stand around. Jesus Christ will be the judge then, as well as at the last day. That function is assigned to the Son of God in His humanity, in order that as He did the work of redemption, He may also decide as to its effect in each soul of man. Christ is the image of the Father and the model on which all things were made; we have to be modelled according to Him, and He is therefore the standard by which we shall be measured, and either rewarded or condemned. Our salvation depends on our being united with Him by faith, and love, and conduct; He determines whether we are so or not. Our accuser will principally be our own reproaching conscience, and the effects of our sins as written on our character. We may conceive that the "accuser of the brethren" will also be present. The Angel Guardian will certainly be there at the conclusion of his task. Picture these things to your imagination and draw lessons therefrom.

III. Consider the terrors of that judgment. It will be the most terrible and anxious moment of our existence. There will be a sudden and violent transition to a completely new and unimagined state. We shall be called to account for all we have done. How dreadful such a thing is even at present! How many irregularities come to light, gross follies, inexcusable forgetfulness, serious matters which we accounted as the merest trifles. Everything then will take a different aspect: our good deeds that we prided ourselves upon will shrink up in the fierce light; our sins will look more odious and horrible than we can now conceive. Everything will be shown forth with rigid truthfulness; and we shall be horrified at the unexpected result. Consider that day with terror, and think how you will appear. "It will come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps. . . . The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift; the voice of the day of the Lord is bitter" (Soph. i. 12, 14).

3.—THE STATE OF SOULS AFTER DEATH.

I. Although the final destiny of souls is fixed at the very moment of death, and is known to them, yet they do not attain at once to finality, but remain in an incomplete state till the resurrection of bodies at the end of time. The conscious soul is not the whole man ; while separated from the body it is in an abnormal state. The effects of the life on earth assert themselves in the soul as soon as the gates of death are passed ; for the first time the soul sees what the man has made himself ; still the fulness of reward or punishment is not accomplished until body and soul combine again into the one being, and each is apt to receive its share. The souls of the wicked and of those who are perfectly sanctified enter however into the abode of their eternity ; they are in hell or in heaven, *i.e.*, they are excluded from God's presence, or are placed in possession of Him. In the case of the just, there may be obstacles to their immediate entrance into their reward. There was a time, before the Redemption, when heaven was not ready for them ; and there are many who at death are not ready for heaven. These remain in a temporary state. God in His goodness has given us some scanty but sufficient knowledge of the great secrets of the future. Exact details are wanting to us, and men fill them up from their own conjectures or reasonings ; but substantially we know what the future states are. The future is not absolutely dark to us : it is dim indeed, but still certain.

II. Before Christ, none of the souls of the elect were able to enter the presence of God. Redemption was not yet accomplished, sin not yet expiated, the obstacles between man and God still remained ; souls had not yet been washed and sanctified in the blood of the Saviour. Our Lord, as Man and the First-born of humanity, had not

entered into heaven, to open the way to us, and to effect the final fusion of the natural and the supernatural. The spirits of the just, not yet made perfect, remained in some state of darkness, as not being illumined by the light of God's countenance, a state of weary waiting, but of hope, not final although secure. The Gospel calls it "Abraham's bosom." The knowledge of this state penetrated to heathen nations under the name of Hades; in the Creed it is spoken of as hell, in the Epistles as "the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. iv. 9). We shall be saved from the weariness of the long sojourn in Limbo, far worse than the weariness of the longest life on earth. Heaven is ready for us as soon as we make ourselves ready for it. Be grateful to God for being called under the New Dispensation.

III. Under the present dispensation there is a temporary abode of souls in the next world. There are many in whom, at death, sins committed have not yet exhausted their due effects; such satisfaction as they yet owe to divine justice has not been paid; they remain for a time in a state whence they will go out as soon as the last farthing is paid. This condition is Purgatory or the state of purgation. Further there are some, many even, who are not qualified for the future supernatural life, because they have not gained possession of it during the present period of preparation; and, at the same time, they are not guilty of deliberately rejecting it; the opportunity has not been presented to them. They are simply incapable of the higher knowledge of God and delight in Him, and on the other hand, they have done nothing that deserves punishment. Such are infants who have died unbaptized, and possibly some others who are practically in the same position. They are lost, in the sense that they are outside the supernatural sphere; they are saved, however, from the torments of hell, and they know not what they have lost. They will enjoy a natural knowledge and enjoyment of God. Adore the Providence and love of God in all these manifestations.

4.—THE END OF THE WORLD.

I. Our Lord has vouchsafed us some knowledge of the end of the present system on this earth. That there will be an end is certain, on grounds of science as well as of revelation. When it will be, we are not told. It is dependent on certain contingencies, the free action of men, the filling up of the cup of iniquity, and the making up of the numbers of the elect. "But of that day and hour no one knoweth; no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone" (Matt. xxiv. 36). Certain signs of the approach of the end have been given to us in revelation; but these are not for the purpose of enlightening us as to its exact date; they are for the encouragement of the faithful under the awful trials of that time. Certain physical details have also been described for us: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up" (2 Pet. iii. 10). Science demonstrates the likelihood of such a violent termination of the earth's course before its vitality and heat are exhausted. The words of Scripture, therefore, may be taken in their most literal and material sense. Of how little consequence is this earth and our immense solar system in the scheme of the universe! When all comes to an end, it will not even be remarked by possible observers on a distant star. How trivial are all our material works here! Nothing will endure but the spiritual results of our actions. Think chiefly of this.

II. The great movement of human life that underlies the surface, is the struggle between good and evil. As the end draws near, this contest will grow more involved and more ruthless. Human powers increase more and more, every influence extends more widely, and all will be drawn into the conflict. There will be "wars and rumours of wars . . .

nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt. xxiv. 6, 7). There will be no final perfection of the whole race on earth, no extinction of evil; but the forces of each element will be concentrated. Good, let us hope, will gravitate towards good; and those who wish to serve God will be forced into union by the need of making head against the combination of evil. The spirit of wickedness is personified under the name of Anti-Christ; it exists indeed under many forms at all times (1 John ii. 18); but, according to historical analogy, it will probably express itself fully in some society, or even in some one dominant personality. You are taking a part now in the preliminaries of that final conflict. Your present life and actions will tell then on one side or the other. See that they tend towards good; and do your best.

III. Again at the end of all things, the general features of the conflict will be as always since Cain slew Abel. The two lines of good and evil will advance logically from principles to conclusions. There will be no mundane triumph of good over evil, but Christ will be again and again rejected and crucified in His followers. They "shall put you to death, and you shall be hated by all nations. . . . False prophets shall rise and seduce many. . . . Many shall be scandalized, and shall betray one another. . . . There shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world. . . . The abomination of desolation shall stand in the holy place. . . . There will be danger that no flesh should be saved" (Matt. xxiv.). And at last the end will come, suddenly, when least expected, and cut short all the amusements, and the strivings, and the vain ambitions, and the accumulations, and the triumphant wickedness of this world. Is it in you to be faithful under such trials? Consider how badly you face the trials of these less critical times, how wanting you are in the dispositions of heroes and martyrs. Strive to rise to that height.

5.—THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

I. One of the most definite truths of the Old and New Testament is that we shall live again, not only with the same consciousness, but in our present material bodies. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again in my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God" (Job xix. 25, 26). The mother of the Machabees said to her sons: "The King of the world will raise us up who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life. . . . The Creator of the world . . . will restore to you again in His mercy both breath and life" (2 Mac. vii. 9, 23). St. Paul draws out the proof of our corporeal resurrection from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And Our Lord tells us that "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God . . . and shall come forth unto the resurrection" (John v. 28, 29). All nature points out to us the great facts of the permanence of life under change of form, revival after death, the indestructibility of matter and force. The imperfect revivals that we see in progress are figures and assurances of our more perfect revival in a better form, and of the permanence of man, who is the greatest created force on earth. It is a most wonderful illumination of our lives to know that we shall live, not merely in the effects of our actions, like the sunlight; or in the senseless atoms of our bodies, like the trees; or in our descendants; but in our present personal identity with continuous consciousness.

II. The doctrine of our corporeal resurrection is very important in view of the harmony and completeness of Christian dogma. 1. The great cycle of the divine operations is completed by the return of the world to God in man's return to Him. Matter in its passage from force to dead substance, into living and conscious beings, comes at last to be refined and spiritualized in the resurrection of the body, so that it enters into union with God in the elect, as

well as previously in Jesus Christ. Not only does the soul, which is immediately from God, return to God; but the body also, which has passed through so many intermediate stages, goes back to its Maker. 2. Man, as a whole, as a complete being, has been made to serve God and rejoice in Him. The body is not the man, the soul is not the man; he is essentially the compound of both. The activity of man is not limited to the soul; the body bears a most important share in the joint action. It is at present the necessary instrument of the soul, as the orchestra is of the musical composer. The permanence of the man is the permanence of body as well as soul. 3. The body also must have its share of the reward or punishment, according to that: "By what a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented" (Wisd. xi. 17), and again: "That every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Cor. v. 10). Consider how this adds to future joy or misery.

III. Like all other mysteries, the resurrection of the body presents difficulties which our present knowledge is not able to solve. Scripture teaches us the bare facts but not the full details. Physical investigations give us only a few analogies to enlighten us about the possibilities of our future bodies. We know at least that matter can exist in modes such as do not at present fall beneath our senses, and that certain material forces exhibit qualities very similar to what are attributed to the risen body. St. Paul tells us that we shall be in some important respects changed, and yet that we shall be unchanged; that in some way "the corruptible must put on incorruption"; that "if there be a natural body there is also a spiritual body"; that "there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial" (1 Cor. xv.). This is enough for our guidance. Consider how glorious will be your risen state, with body and soul perfected, with the universe opened to you, with new powers, new knowledge, new joys, and the full revelation of God's glory.

6.—THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

I. Holy Scripture has made most important revelations to us about the General Judgment at the end of the world. It frequently repeats that God is a judge, and that He will come to judge the world, its good and its evil together. "Know ye that there is a judgment" (Job xix. 29). "Behold the Lord cometh with thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove the ungodly for all the works of their ungodliness . . . and all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against God" (Jude, 14, 15). "God shall judge both the just and the wicked, and then shall be the time of everything" (Eccles. iii. 17). The thought of this should always be kept in mind, as an encouragement in doing good and a restraint upon sin, for comfort in tribulations, and for the better understanding of the ways of Providence. Men forget that every deliberate word, thought and action has its full effect, that the effect includes responsibility, and that this means judgment: and so an important restraint is removed. "Because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evils without any fear" (Eccles. viii. 11). Recall this thought frequently, and let it exercise a continual influence on your life.

II. The General Judgment will be much more than the particular judgment which follows death. It will be more than mere reward or condemnation. It will be a public manifestation of the history and development of every human soul, fuller and more interesting than any such work that man has written. It will be a manifestation of the wonderful justice and mercy in the dealings of divine Providence with individual souls. It will unravel the tangled

skein of influences received and influences originated by each soul, the long chains of causes and effects of action, the degrees of malice, or of merit, or of excuse, for every deed of every soul. It will reverse the false conclusions of human judgments, destroy unmerited reputation, and restore the character of those wrongfully accused; it will rectify all injustice, and make adequate compensation. Then only, when all is complete, can the whole consequences of our actions be exhibited and our life summed up. Then too, the body will take part in the judgment and sentence. How much there will be in your life to unravel, reveal and rectify! Set your house in order now that you may not need to be disillusioned in that terrible day.

III. The General Judgment will be much more than the manifestation and judgment of individual souls. When God had advanced each stage in the work of creation, He paused, as it were, summed it up, and pronounced it good. That verdict was omitted in the case of man, although it was more required. But it could not then be pronounced. Man is free; he is erratic; much in him is good and much is evil; he was to determine his own destiny, and not God; and the results were to be various and conflicting. When this earth is a thing of the past and the record of history is closed, God will sum up the results of His work in creation, and of man's work in forming himself. The long course of humanity will be shown as a whole. We shall see the divine plan, its wisdom and beneficence; we shall see what would have been the result of guiding our course by the laws of God; we shall see how much in actual events was due to God and how much to men, how much to the influence of the just and of the wicked. Then will God be justified in His judgments, and will overcome when He is judged (Ps. l. 6). How wonderful will these revelations be! How we shall praise God's ways when we understand them, and rejoice in the justification of our faith and hope!

7.—CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE JUDGMENT.

I. Consider the Judge before whom we shall appear. He is Jesus Christ "who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead" (Acts x. 42). "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ" (2 Cor. v. 10). This is one of the distinctive offices of Our Lord. He is the Mediator both of grace and of justice; the medium of God's mercy to the repentant, the mouth-piece of divine judgment on obstinate sinners. "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son" (John v. 22). "Who is He that shall condemn? Christ Jesus that died" (Rom. viii. 34). Our Lord was judged and condemned by every class of men; He is the first to whom justice has to be done. He suffered from calumnies, misapprehension, unjust judgment, the intensity of all human wickedness during His life on earth. In return He must be elevated in the sight of all men, and compensated in proportion to the injustice done; He is therefore made the Judge of the world. "He hath prepared His throne in judgment, and He shall judge the world in equity, He shall judge the people in justice" (Ps. ix. 8, 9). Do not forget this office of Christ, and hold Him in awe accordingly, as well as in affection. It should fill us with confidence to think that our judge is He who has experience of our infirmities, who died for us and always makes intercession for us.

II. The belief of the Church is that the last judgment will take place on the very scene of our labours, *i.e.*, on this earth. Thus the angels who appeared after Our Lord's ascension said, "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts. i. 11). And again the prophet says: "I will gather together all nations, and will bring them down

into the valley of Josaphat. . . . Break forth and come, all ye nations from round about, and gather yourselves together: there will the Lord cause all thy strong ones to fall down. Let them arise, and let the nations come up into the valley of Josaphat: for there I will sit to judge all nations round about" (Joel iii. 2, 11, 12). There is the central spot of this world's history; around there, all the great manifestations of God have taken place—the birth of the Son of God, His great works, His death, resurrection, and ascension. The Apostles and the elect will further share, in some sense, with Our Lord in His great office. Christ told His twelve that they would "sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 30). And St. Paul says to the faithful: "Know you not that the saints shall judge this world? And if the world shall be judged by you, etc. . . . Know you not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). You must be like Our Lord now, if you are to bear that likeness to Him then. You must share now in His good works and sufferings at the hands of the world, if you would judge the world with Him.

III. Picture to yourself the events of the great day—the Judge coming from heaven in glory surrounded by the celestial court, His Blessed Mother, the Apostles, and the great saints of the Old and New Testament; the multitude of all mankind before Him; the separation of the good from the bad; the opening of the books and the full revelation of every man's conscience; the comparison of every life with the ideal standard of holiness as shown in Our Lord; the triumphs of grace in some, the miserable failure of others. The final result of all creation will be summed up, the long conflict of good and evil will end in the final dominance of truth and goodness, and the Judge will complete the verdict on His creation, that a certain part is good and blessed of the Father, and another part accursed of God for ever. Try so to live that the events of the last day may not be a terror to you but a triumph.

8.—THE TERRORS OF THE JUDGMENT.

I. "That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity" (Soph. i. 15). Consider the day of judgment from the point of view of the sinner, a point which may perhaps be yours. The first horror will be the sinner's sight of himself. He will perceive the hideous deformity which sin has wrought in his soul; he will see himself to be a blot upon creation, and out of harmony with the supreme order of things; he will see that he has no place and no utility in the supernatural sphere in which God and the faithful live. Sin will then appear as it really is, not as a pleasant indulgence, or as an amiable weakness, or as matter for amusement, or as obedience to a pretended law of nature; but as a foulness, a folly, a fatal disappointment, an outrage on God, and the sinner's own destruction. They had expected, or pretended to expect, impunity; they had enjoyed it for a while and would not believe the warnings of God. But it will be said to them: "These things thou hast done, and I was silent. Thou didst think unjustly that I should be like to thee; but I will reprove thee and set it before thy face" (Ps. xlix. 21). The sinner will loathe himself for his sins, and will hate the Most Holy and His saints because of the contrast of their purity and glory with his own condition. There is much in you that is horrible. Ask God to help you to see it, so that you may purify yourself in time by penance and love.

II. A second terror will be the manifestation of their sins, the account that will be demanded of them, and the passing of the sentence. How terrible on earth is the rigid investigation of a court of justice, to one who has done secret wrongs, who has prospered in iniquity, and who has stood well with men! What an anxious moment it is to any one

who has to render an account of his stewardship or to pass a test of any kind! How terrible to fall under the anger or the scorn of an all-powerful superior or of a hostile multitude! The sinner will find himself exposed and defenceless before the widest possible publicity: all his meanness and shame and criminality will be set forth: he will feel himself an object of reprobation and horror to the vast assembly of saints and angels: he will find the indignation of the Almighty to be overwhelming—more so than the utmost fury of all animate and inanimate nature, more so even than hell itself. How many are rushing eagerly and gaily to this termination! It is their own choice, and warnings are of no avail. Take care that no passion, or timidity, or half-heartedness bring you to the same.

III. The most terrible thing to sinners will be the aspect of Our Lord Jesus Christ, shining with all the splendour of the Divinity, in His justice, and holiness, and beauty, and love. They shall look on Him with terror because this is He "whom they have pierced" (Zach. xii. 10). "He cometh with the clouds and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him" (Apoc. i. 7). How bitter to them will be the triumph of Him whom they opposed, and hated, and condemned. They sought to disprove His existence, to disprove at least His Divinity, to insult Him and all that belonged to Him, to overthrow His kingdom, to turn the hearts of children and lowly ones against Him; and then they will find themselves crushed, and reduced to impotence, and convinced in spite of themselves. His love will be a reproach to them, His holiness a torture, His Divinity a crushing terror. Then will "they say to the mountains and the rocks, Fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come" (Apoc. vi. 16, 17). Such is the end to which sin leads.

9.—THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION.

I. The Judgment of God on the world will be different from all those that we know of on earth. 1. It will be most complete. The knowledge of the cause will be perfect, and there will be the fullest consideration of all the circumstances. There will be no concealment of facts, no obscuring of the issue, no pretended excuses. All will be most rigid and equitable. 2. No intervention will be possible to change the sentence. All intercession, *viz.*, the voice of the Precious Blood, has been rejected by the sinner during life; and failing that, "there is no man that can deliver out of Thy hand" (Job x. 7). 3. There will be no appeal to a higher court, for there is none higher. 4. There will be no pleading of repentance to move the Judge, for the criminals are those who have finally refused to repent, and have hardened themselves against pardon. 5. No atonement can be made by the guilty; man is not capable of it, and they have rejected the atonement of their Saviour. Therefore "no brother can redeem, nor shall man redeem. He shall not give to God his ransom nor the price of the redemption of his soul; and he shall labour for ever, and shall live unto the end" (Ps. xlviii. 8-10). Now, the future is to you as plastic as wax: you can now make that inexorable judgment to be what you like: you can pay the price of the redemption of your soul. Do not wait, as many do, till the opportunity is past.

II. The sentence of the last day will be different from all those threats and sentences on sinners recorded in Holy Scripture; these are mostly prospective and conditional, or temporal and not final. Sentence was pronounced against the Israelites, but Moses offered himself as a victim, and they were spared. Destruction was decreed against Nineveh, and was averted by a universal fasting and repentance.

We are warned of the effect of our sins, but it does not come to pass, or perhaps only partially; and such punishments as do take place, are less to inflict vengeance than to teach us the law, and move us to observe it in the future. The blood of Jesus is always crying for mercy, the prayers and good works of the just counterbalance the sins of others, the law of cause and effect is being modified by the intervention of supernatural causes that check the progress of evil. But the sentence of the last day will be inexorable as the physical laws of nature. All intervention of repentance, mercy, and atonement, will be at an end. Consequences will follow rigidly on their causes. The sentence will be eternal, never to be revoked or modified. "Behold now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). Make the most of it now, lest it pass away suddenly for ever.

III. A further thing to be remarked about the last sentence of the Judge is that it will be carried into effect at once. The frustrations of God's will, and delays in accomplishing it will no more take place. The dominance of God's will will then be established, and the human will can no more come into conflict with it. "My counsel shall stand, and all My will shall be done" (Isa. xlvi. 10). Straightway those miserable souls will enter into the state of punishment which will last for ever. Their resistance to God will continue, but it will be limited within their own sphere; they will no more have the satisfaction of obscuring the truth, of resisting the ordinances of God, of misleading the souls of others, of gaining partial victories over goodness. There will then be none of those alleviations that they enjoy now, no preservation from the full consequences of their sin, no admixture of good things in their lot as here, no graces from God, no benefits from the companionship of the just. Consider the terrors of the sentence. "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear; for I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. cxviii. 120).

10.—THE PERSONAL CONDITION OF THE BLESSED.

I. The sentence of the great Judge on the blessed will be: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). They will at once enter upon a new life, complete in every way, perfect in happiness, and eternal. The change that takes place will not be only in their external circumstances, it will be also in themselves. The same consciousness will remain, the same memories of the past, the same bodies in which they worked and suffered; but every department of their being will be brought to perfection in ways that are beyond our present comprehension. God has not given us full enlightenment. We know that in the resurrection we shall be as the angels of God in heaven (Matt. xxii. 30). We shall possess our material bodies, yet they will be spiritualized. "The dead shall rise again incorruptible; and we shall be changed. . . . We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). We shall receive certain new bodily qualities which are incongruous with our present bodies; our bodies therefore must be so changed that these qualities will not be unnatural but harmonious. Thank God for such knowledge as He has given you, *viz.*, that you will really rise again in your present body, in a state of inconceivable glory.

II. Consider the qualities of the spiritualized body. 1. Immortality and impassibility. The material composing our bodies will acquire a permanence of condition, so that it will not be subject to waste and the need of reparation, to division or changes in its atoms and molecules. 2. It will possess Brilliancy. "The just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). This may

mean the deliverance of the body from the grossness that vests the force-nucleus on which it is built up: or it may be, as is supposed, the sensible property of luminosity, imparted to the preternaturally refined matter. 3. It has Agility, *i.e.*, its movements are free, and are not, like ours, trammelled by the laws of space. A somewhat analogous quality is found to be possessed by the quasi-material force of gravity. 4. Subtility. Light has a certain analogous subtility in respect of glass; heat also, as it affects iron for instance; the X-rays for certain substances; and especially the fluid called ether, which passes freely through every known substance. Certain stages of the graduated refinement of matter are known to us: solids can be liquefied and vaporized; it is possible that under other conditions they might be etherealized; certain it is that matter, in our bodies, will reach the final stage and become spiritualized. To attain to this, you must now spiritualize your body by religion and virtue. Do not overlay it with a grossness from which it will never emerge.

III. The spiritual body will be exempted from all those functions which regard the maintenance of life on earth, and which will have done their work and ceased. The appetites, passions, senses, the machinery for self-protection, nourishment, growth, will no longer be required. Yet that condition will not be unnatural; it will be the normal state of the body in its then state of perfection. We are now like certain insects in their larval state. They are torpid, seemingly dead, shut up in darkness, unbeautiful (in a sense), provided with mechanisms which will soon become superfluous, and food which will later be unsuitable. Suddenly the chrysalis breaks forth into a new life full of warmth, and joy, and beauty; it is different in every respect from what it was, yet it is the same. You cannot picture or describe the realities of your future state; but you may give reins to your imagination and still be sure that its greatest excess will fall short of the future joy and glory.

11.—HEAVEN.

I. Heaven is chiefly and substantially the supernatural state on the other side of death. We must not press figurative language so far as to think of heaven as an enclosed space into which any one, good or bad, could enter, whether qualified or not. Heavenly beatitude involves two things: subjectively, an aptitude for God; objectively, the unveiled presence of God, so as to be seen and possessed by man in the risen state. The presence of God would be a torment worse than hell to the soul in which the aptitude for Him had not been developed. Beings which have not that aptitude formed by grace and virtue in the state of probation, such as inanimate objects, beasts, and sinners, are not capable of enjoying the delights of heaven. Those who have that aptitude are in heaven. The Guardian Angels, so far as they are in place, are on this earth; yet they are not, for that, outside of heaven (Matt. xviii. 10). The throne of God is situated only in boundless immensity. To be in heaven is a matter of internal aptitudes and not of geographical locality, like being in the grace of God or in the Church. These aptitudes can only be formed in the soul by supernatural life while on earth. Failing this, the unrepentant soul cannot enter heaven; God could not admit it to the enjoyment of heaven, being what it is, for this would be a contradiction in terms. That which harmonizes with the spiritual condition of the blessed and constitutes their supreme joy, is repugnant to the formed habits and tastes of the wicked, and so would excite their antipathy and inflict pain upon them. You must spiritualize yourself during this life, else you will remain for ever unapt for heaven.

II. Heaven will be supreme happiness, because it is the possession of God who is the superabounding ocean of all that is true, good, beautiful and useful. Consider how this

world overflows with wonders and delights, which appeal to sense, intelligence, and all our faculties. Consider how our delights would be increased if our powers were enlarged and obstacles removed. Multiply these possibilities indefinitely, and yet they will never amount to a fraction of heavenly happiness. God is heaven; and His treasures placed at our disposal will be infinitely higher in degree than anything in creation, infinitely various, and eternal; there will be no exhaustion of them, no sense of monotony and weariness, no drawbacks. Heaven will be ever ancient and ever new; our faculties will be increased, and will find the fullest satisfaction. God's "conversation hath no bitterness, nor His company any tediousness, but joy and gladness" (Wisd. viii. 16). This thought should be a comfort to you under all circumstances. Keep it always before you. Strive always to reach the kingdom.

III. The delights of heaven will not be those of sense—sights, sounds, tastes, odours, comforts. That which is of sense is intended for the maintenance of earthly life; yet the spiritualized body will in some fitting way have its share in the delight of possessing God. Our happiness will be of the intellectual and spiritual kind, which even now we recognize to be the highest. Our intelligence will be made perfectly clear and its range enlarged. We shall know all things in God, and delight in the contemplation of His wonders, both in creatures and in Himself. Above all, there will be the delight of adhesion to God as our life, as the object of all our cravings, as the satisfaction of every intellectual and spiritual appetite. This impulse is love, a supreme delight in adhesion to God, and in the consciousness of His adhesion to us. Yet when all is said, we have said nothing. The tongue of man cannot describe, the imagination cannot conceive the delights of heaven. They will differ not only in degree but in kind from all that we can imagine. Employ your thoughts and desires chiefly on those things which will be your delight in eternity.

12.—THE EXISTENCE OF HELL.

I. Hell is primarily separation from God in the other world, as heaven is the possession of God. Hell is the necessary consequence of sin, as darkness is the necessary consequence of excluding the light; or rather hell is sin under another aspect, *viz.*, as transferred from time to eternity. It may be said that sin is its own punishment, or at least that it works its own punishment. The variety of pains in hell are only the different ways in which the loss of God and the action of sin are apprehended by the body and soul. All that is of the essence of hell is the immediate product of sin. Hell then is no arbitrary punishment devised by God and inflicted by His action; it flows from the sinner's own act, for God can do nothing but what is beneficent. Evil and death cannot proceed from Him who is essential goodness and life. "Destruction is thine own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me" (Osee xiii. 9). Hell is the continuation of the sinner's life as commenced on earth; it is a transformation and also a conservation of the same energy of sin which worked in him here. If you love and seek sin, you are loving hell under a thin disguise. If you cut yourself off from faith and virtue, you are cutting yourself off from God and from heaven, which are now presented to you under those forms.

II. Man is free, and can insist on choosing selfishness and godlessness as his lot in this world. In the course of time use becomes second nature, habits are formed which men cannot change, because they will never wish to change them. The sinner becomes confirmed and obstinate in his sin, blinded and indifferent to its consequences: his ruling passion remains strong in death, and after death. Death works no change: it brings a last call to repentance, a last impulse of grace; but if there be no repentance, death itself is no sacrament of expiation, and does not alter the

character. Alienation from goodness endures in the form of alienation from God; immersion in sin endures as immersion in hell. As motion continues for ever in a straight line unless perturbed by some external force; so the direction of the soul's action continues, unless some act of man aided by God's grace intervenes during this life to turn it back. The sinner remains for ever alienated from God, and absent from Him in a supernatural sense, unable to see Him and enjoy Him, even though he should be substantially in His presence. God is in a sense with him, but he is not with God. How terrible and inexorable is the effect of unrepented sin! It must work its full consequences; and unless by religion you cast these consequences on Jesus Christ, you will have to bear them in full yourself.

III. Granted the free will of man, the obstinacy of some in sin, and the continuance of that state beyond the grave, hell follows as a logical and necessary consequence. It is not a question of the lost soul's release from a dungeon and admission to a royal banquet by the fiat of the great King; but it is as might be the case of a man who has reduced himself in associations, and character, and intellect, till he is on the same level as the cattle, and who cannot associate on equal terms with men of refinement and genius; he is out of his element, out of harmony with his environment, and he hates that which is supreme happiness to others. The lost sinner cannot see and enjoy God while only capable of enjoying the pleasures of sense and sin; he cannot love God while he hates God and all that savours of God; he cannot acquire a new character and habits when the time for doing this is absolutely past. He has made himself antipathetic to God; he has set the seal of obstinacy to his determination, and his will cannot be forced. How are you forming your character? You are building it up either in hostility to God or in union with Him. As you make it now, so it is likely to be through life: and as it is found at death, so will it remain for eternity.

13.—THE PUNISHMENTS OF HELL.

I. The nature of the punishments of hell follows upon the nature of sin. The first thing in sin is that it is essentially opposed to the divine nature; consequently the chief punishment or effect of this is the loss of God; this is the *pœna damni*, or damnation strictly speaking. The loss of God is the loss of all that is good in every kind and degree. Consider what one loss is in this world, even if we retain everything else; the loss of sight, of nerve, of health, of possessions, of companionship, of occupation, of bride or bridegroom, of food or water or liberty for a short time. One such loss makes all else useless; it may drive a man to desperation, madness or death. The loss of God is the loss at once of everything; of the object and aim of existence, of wholesome activity, of all that makes life happy, of all that constitutes the life of the mind and spirit apart from bare existence. Life without God, even on earth, is empty, unsatisfying, wearisome, disappointing: life for ever without Him is the accumulation of every misery. Consider the gains which accrue from sin; some slight gratification or advantage which generally lasts but a short time, a little wealth, the approval of a few men, the satisfaction of pride, hatred, lust. For a few years of this, or perhaps for the gain from one sin, a man sacrifices the totality and eternity of all good. To run the slightest risk of this is the height of folly.

II. Hell has further a direct effect on body and soul, as sin has. This is the *pœna sensus*. The violation of the law of one's being entails the loss of one's well-being, and the suffering of injury proportioned to the law broken. How calamitous is the destruction of equilibrium and order in the world; in the elements of nature, in commerce and industry, in social or international relations: it means war, pestilence, famine, anarchy, ruin. In hell there is "no order, but everlasting horror" of body and mind, of every sense and faculty. The soul is torn with fury, hatred,

disappointment, remorse; the body is the victim of every possible disorder and pain, on account of its own sinful excesses, which will work for ever, and by reason of its sympathy with the disordered soul. There is disorder or hostility between the sinner and his human and diabolical companions, and also against the just whom he hated on earth, and against God. Further, the whole of creation is combined against the sinner; he suffers at the hands of inanimate beings; from that mysterious "fire," of which it is written, God's "zeal will take armour, and He will arm the creature for vengeance on His enemies" (Wisd. v. 18). How terrible the consequences that lie concealed under the deceptive surface of sin!

III. Hell being sin, there is a most precise and necessary proportion between the offence here and the punishment hereafter. There is not an identical penalty for all men, as there is in the case of human justice, where there is no organic connection between guilt and punishment. The character or capacity which a man makes for himself during this life, will be the measure alike of his glory in heaven or of his misery in hell. "According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be" (Deut. xxv. 2). The sinner will feel that he has only himself to blame both for his condemnation and for the mode of his punishment; that he is his own executioner, and that his hell is of his own making; in the same way that the glutton and the drunkard and the gambler are the cause of their own misfortunes on earth. "By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented" (Wisd. xi. 17). There will be a terrible rigour of exact justice in this, and yet no possible reproach against God's mercy and forbearance. The sinner's remorse will be the more bitter when he understands that "he hath opened a pit and dug it, and he is fallen into the hole he made. His sorrow shall be turned on his own head, and his iniquity shall come down upon his crown" (Ps. vii. 16, 17). Do not think that you can commit sin and escape its effects.

14.—THE ETERNITY OF HELL.

I. The most terrible element of hell, its eternity, depends, like all other of its details, on the nature of man and the nature of sin. Man is immortal, his decision at death is final, his sin if not recalled is eternal, hell therefore cannot be otherwise than eternal. 1. The soul is indestructible. God gives and does not withdraw; He creates and does not destroy; His action tends towards being and what is positive, and not towards the negative and to non-being, which is the direct opposite to Him. The soul then cannot be annihilated. Neither can it die; for dying is the resolution of the atoms, and their entrance into new combinations; the soul is not composed of atoms. The soul, as the noblest being and greatest force on earth, cannot be less durable than the particle of granite which remains from the foundation of the world, than the ray of sunshine whose effect goes on till the end. 2. The effect of the soul's action is in itself eternal; for no force ordinarily is dissipated and lost; it continues in its consequences. The one exception is when sin expends its energy on Our Lord Jesus Christ, and is reversed by the infinite power of His atonement, which is applied to us by means of repentance and the sacraments. How great is the importance of man in the universe; how great the responsibilities of his life! The effect of your works this day will never be lost. Take care so to act that they may abide unto eternal life and not unto death.

II. The act of sin is transient, but the adhesion of the soul to it remains for ever unless duly reversed. The obstinate sinner entering eternity is guilty of an everlasting sin: his mind is for ever in a state of active resistance to God. If even in hell he turned with repentance and love to God, his sin would be forgiven by infinite mercy, he

would become capable of the Beatific Vision, and would therefore attain to it. But he is in hell because he has refused to repent and will for ever refuse. The sin will not fade away and die out in lapse of time; it is ever being renewed in intention; and the continuance of the sinful disposition can never amount to a reversal of the effect of sin. The endurance of punishment is no expiation; it does not undo the effect of sin and produce a counterbalancing degree of good: only the infinite sufferings of God the Son can have that effect. Human pain is no more meritorious than the blood of calves and oxen; it is not a sacrament to raise the soul to the supernatural state; still less will it do this when united with rebellion and hatred. Thus is sin in itself inexpiable. What a mercy for us that the Precious Blood expiates it so easily, so often, so effectually!

III. The pains of hell will never lead the sinner to repentant love. The pains of sin are the workings of sin; and such a cause cannot produce divine virtue, as darkness cannot produce light. The sinner who resisted God's grace and the love of Jesus to the end, would proudly resist conversion by the force of punishment. Violence may at times compel an outward acquiescence, but it moves rather to greater hatred of the irresistible power than to tender love. The remorse of the wicked is not hatred of their sin, but hatred of the supreme law under which they have lost the enjoyment of sin. They would rather live for ever in order to hate God, than purchase alleviation by humble submission and love. "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and wounds, and did not penance from their works" (Apoc. xvi. 10, 11). How terrible is the havoc which sin works in the mind and heart! The way is short and easy, from sin to habit, to obstinacy, to blindness, to hatred of goodness and God, to refusal of repentance and eternal loss. Refrain from the first steps on this fatal downward course.

15.—THE END OF ALL THINGS.

I. After summing up the history of this earth and humanity, and awarding to the just and unjust what each has merited, the Lord Jesus Christ will rise up from the now vacant, silent, and exhausted earth, and will lead the whole of His heavenly court of angels and men to that larger universe of heaven where the new eternal era will begin. "We . . . shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16). In His first Ascension, Jesus Christ ended His own personal course on earth; He ascended corporally to His throne; the souls only of a few of His elect mounted with Him; their bodies remained in the dust; and the rest of His saints had yet to be called into being to carry out their long struggle. The final Ascension will be complete. Then will Christ ascend with the whole of His mystical body the Church, a great multitude whom no man can number, glorified both in soul and in body. "The chariot of God is attended by ten thousand, thousands of them that rejoice; the Lord is among them in Sion, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive" (Ps. lxvii. 18, 19). Imagine to yourself the exultation of Christ and His elect, and the glory rendered to God beyond all that has ever gone before. How magnificent that triumph! How blessed those who shall take part in it!

II. The great cycle of the earth's course will then at last be closed. Its long evolution from the creation of primæval force, the condensation of the earth from nebular matter, its gradual arrangement through countless stages, the appearance of man, his turbulent and miserable history,

his puny works and progress, all will be over. The refined and purified residuum will have been brought round again to God whence all things started. Through terrible struggles, with loss as by fire, the grains of gold will have been gathered from the dross, and placed for ever as an ornament in the house of the Lord. Out of the great mass of dead matter, of living tissue, out of the bulk of a sinful race, "these were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 4). The conflict of good and evil will be over, the tares separated from the wheat, and the reign of eternal justice will begin. "And He that sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new" (Apoc. xxi. 5). You too are going through a long course of evolution. You started from God, you passed through many vicissitudes of thought, word, action, and suffering, of sins and temptations and graces. Pray God that you may complete your task happily and return to Him.

III. Finally Our Lord will present to His Father His "glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but . . . holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27), "When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father" (1 Cor. xv. 24). Then all which remains will be fully subject to God, His domination will be established, and He will reign for ever. All things will have served man, or at least the elect, they will have served Christ, and He will present the whole to the Eternal King: "for all are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's (1 Cor. iii. 23). "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son also shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor xv. 28). Take care during this life to observe this due order of subordination. All things are given to you for your advantage; which is that they should lead you to Jesus Christ, and that He should lead you to happiness and perfection, and to union with the Infinite and Supreme Life.

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